

THE CHALLENGE OF NEW TESTAMENT ETHICS

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# THE CHALLENGE OF NEW TESTAMENT ETHICS

BY

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1946

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## PREFACE

On one occasion Ewald is said to have held up a well-worn copy of Tischendorf's Greek Testament and to have exclaimed: 'Gentlemen, in this little book is all the wisdom of the world.' That was not too high a tribute to pay to the New Testament. In that faith the following pages have been written, and it is that faith which they seek to justify.

In recent years quite a number of books on New Testament Ethics have appeared, and another work on that subject can be justified only by its difference from its predecessors. This book differs from them in several respects. The subject-matter is normally presented in a somewhat atomic fashion, but here it is arranged in a systematic way, though without any undue systematising of the essentially unsystematic. Most books on New Testament Ethics seem to have the needs of clergy and ministers almost exclusively in view, but this one is intended also for the intelligent layman, Christian or not; and though Greek words often occur, they are always translated, so that the book can be understood from beginning to end without any knowledge of that ancient language. As it has recently been complained that, in all departments, 'scholars write just for scholars' and are unintelligible to the ordinary cultivated reader, an earnest endeavour has been made to state the case in plain terms. It is much to be regretted that, while those who attack Christianity write in a clear and trenchant style which anybody of ordinary intelligence can understand, those who write in its defence can be understood only by theological specialists. The result is that the former writers reach the general public, while the latter completely fail to do so. Finally, the treatment of the subject in this book is not purely

## *Preface*

academic, but seeks to relate the ethical message of the New Testament to the dominant problems and needs of the present day.

This book was originally provided with a Prologue and an Epilogue, but for various reasons these have been omitted. The themes with which they dealt I hope to treat more adequately in another work.

My indebtedness to others who have laboured in this field is fully acknowledged in the text. I owe most to the stimulus received in my student days from the late Adolf Deissmann, the greatest New Testament teacher whom it has been my privilege to know—it was he who made me fully alive to the fact that the Greek Testament is no mere collection of dead manuscripts from a distant past but a book which pulses with life and has a living message for every age.

To Dr. A. C. Underwood, who read the typescript and made many useful suggestions, I am greatly indebted. To Miss Hargreaves of Walsall, who kindly prepared the typescript, I tender my best thanks.

Rawdon,

*November, 1945*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- E.R.E.*     *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.*  
*H.J.*       *Hibbert Journal.*  
*M.M.*       *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan.  
*S.B.*       *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, von H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck.  
*T.W.N.T.* *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, herausgegeben von Gerhard Kittel.



## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF THE ETHICS OF JESUS

#### (a) JESUS AS AN ETHICAL TEACHER

It is often alleged that there is nothing new in the ethical teaching of Jesus. That is true in one sense and false in another. Certain it is that the type of character exemplified in Christians at their best at the beginning of our era was something that the world had never seen before, and it is no less certain that those who trod the Christian Way were convinced that they had struck a new trail which had been blazed by Jesus of Nazareth. Some of the more outstanding features of this new type of character which Christian people introduced into the world are described with no little precision in various documents which have come down to us, notably Clement of Rome's Letter to the Church at Corinth, the Apologies of Justin Martyr, the Apology of Aristides, and the Epistle to Diognetus. On the basis of the evidence thus supplied, it is possible to form a clear and fairly comprehensive idea of the ethical teaching and emphasis of the Early Church. In a world where licentiousness was rife (though, of course, not universal), where public opinion did not frown on vice, but at best regarded it as perfectly natural and quite inevitable, and at worst treated it as a joke, Christians were characterised by a singular purity of life; they committed neither adultery nor fornication, and could justly boast that though they lived in the flesh they did not live after the flesh. In contrast to their pagan neighbours, it was not their practice to expose children to death, for they never regarded any child born to them as 'unwanted', and, furthermore, they deemed child-life a sacred thing. They scorned lying and slander, rapacity and greed; they bore no false witness, coveted no man's property, endeavoured to do by others as they wished others to do by them,

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and valued their spiritual goods more than their material possessions. Instead of seeking to be even with their adversaries, they bore no malice and sought no revenge, but were ready to show kindness even to their enemies. They showed special consideration for widows and orphans, and, if they came across a homeless stranger in desperate need—for there were no 'social services' in those days—they took him under their roof and befriended him. So intense was their loyalty that they were prepared to die rather than surrender one jot or tittle of their Christian faith or practice. In a world where national and racial antagonisms were bitter in the extreme, where Jew regarded Gentile with superior scorn, and Gentile spat on Jew, where the Greek despised all foreigners as barbarians and the Roman looked down on all non-Romans as Scythians, Christian people regarded every foreign country as a fatherland, and every fatherland as foreign, so that in the Christian Church men of different race and nationality mixed and mingled in mutual respect and fraternity, forgetful of the superficial differences that divided them, and conscious only of their common humanity, their common kinship to God, and the common relationship to Christ in which they were made one. As with national and racial differences, so also with cultural and social—in Christian circles, distinctions between the learned and the unlettered, between high and lowly, rich and poor, no longer counted anything. The common slave in Roman Society was usually regarded as a being of inferior clay, to be ranked with his owner's goods and chattels; he was on occasion tortured for a whim or murdered for a jest; and, if his master thought fit, he was cut up to feed the eels in the fishpond; but Christians cared for the slave, and, when he came into their assemblies, he was treated as a brother; in the Church he enjoyed the same rights as other members, and all offices were open to him, his lowly status in the outside world was dismissed as a matter of indifference, while if his owner happened to be a Christian, at the Lord's Table master and slave were often

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found sitting side by side. Woman, in the ancient world, was usually regarded as man's plaything or his drudge and always deemed inferior to her husband, her lord and master, but Christians did not exalt man above woman or woman above man, and insisted that both sexes had equal rights. Brotherly love amongst Christians was a reality. They took to heart all the teaching of Jesus about mercy, compassion, and service. The gospel, as has been rightly said, is at the same time profoundly individualistic and profoundly social.<sup>1</sup> They proved the genuineness of their Christian discipleship by the love they bore to one another. The well-to-do in the Church contributed to the support of widows and orphans and the poor and the sick and the unemployed and unemployable. When Christian brethren had been imprisoned or sent to work in the mines for their faith's sake, efforts were made to establish contact with them, to supply them with the food and other comforts which would lighten their lot, and to secure their release. Decent burial was provided for deceased Christians whose relatives were too poor to pay for it. 'We will not tolerate it,' writes Lactantius, 'that the image and creation of God shall be thrown as prey to wild beasts and birds.'<sup>2</sup> In times of plague Christians stood by one another in brotherly love and chose rather to succumb to the pest than to abandon their sick brethren—in marked contrast to their pagan neighbours who fled even from their nearest and dearest when they began to sicken, threw the dying into the streets and left the dead unburied. Nor did Christians restrict their beneficence to their own fellowship—they were ready to regard any needy person as a 'neighbour'. The Emperor Julian, in a letter to Arsacius, wrote: 'The godless Galileans nourish our poor in addition to their own: while ours get no care from us.'<sup>3</sup> During the great plague in the time of Maximinus Daza,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harnack, *Die Mission u. Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Vol. I, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Inst.* Vol. IV, p. 12. Quoted by Harnack, *op. cit.* p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> *Sozomen*, Vol. V, p. 16. Quoted by Harnack, *op. cit.* p. 187.

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Christians displayed active sympathy and self-denying love to the non-Christian populace. 'They showed themselves at that time to all the heathen in the most brilliant light; for the Christians were the only people who, in the midst of so much and so great tribulation, proved by deeds their sympathy and love of their kind. Some busied themselves day after day with the care and burial of dead bodies (they were without number, and nobody else bothered about them), others gathered together into one place all who were tortured by hunger and supplied them with food. When this became known, people glorified the God of the Christians, and confessed that they alone were the truly pious and God-fearing people, because they gave proof of it by their deeds.'<sup>1</sup> In the light of all this evidence it is surely clear that whatever else Christianity brought into the world it certainly brought a sublime ethic with a great driving force at the back of it; not only a lofty ideal, but the power to realise it. What was the secret? It cannot be better expressed than in the words of Aristides in his *Apology*: 'Now the Christians trace their origin from the Lord Jesus Christ . . . They have the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself graven upon their hearts.'

Though from the Christian point of view, Jesus is *far more* than a mere ethical teacher, yet He certainly *is* that, and ethics is a prominent and distinctive feature of His message. He deals with those perennial issues of right and wrong, good and bad, which are matters of vital moment to men in every age. He makes clear what the good life really is and how it may be attained. He Himself is the Supreme Master of the art of living, and what He has to say about the ideal life for man is a matter of paramount importance to the entire human race—a fact which seems to be recognised by believers and unbelievers alike. For three centuries the Pagan world was unconscious of the importance of Christianity. As Lecky says 'the greatest religious change in the history of man-

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius H. E., Vol. IX, p. 8. Quoted by Harnack, op. cit. p. 197.

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kind' took place 'under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians,' who treated 'as simply contemptible an agency which all men must now admit to have been, for good or for evil, the most powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men.'<sup>1</sup> Again, John Stuart Mill wrote: 'Nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'<sup>2</sup> Jewish scholars, too, are ready enough to admit the profound significance of Jesus for the moral life of man. Montefiore describes Him as 'the most influential of all figures of history and of all teachers of religion.'<sup>3</sup> Klausner concludes his account of the life of Jesus with these words: 'In his ethical code there is a sublimity, distinctiveness and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of his parables. The shrewdness and sharpness of his proverbs and his forceful epigrams serve, in an exceptional degree, to make ethical ideas a popular possession. If ever the day should come and this ethical code be stripped of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures in the literature of Israel for all time.' Bernard Shaw is no less emphatic: 'We have always had a curious feeling that though we crucified Christ on a stick, he somehow managed to get hold of the right end of it, and that if we were better men, we might try his plan. . . . I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman.'<sup>4</sup> In spite of his agnosticism, Middleton Murry pays

<sup>1</sup> *History of European Morals*, Vol. I, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> *Theism*, p. 107. (R.P.A. edition.)

<sup>3</sup> *H.J.*, January 1932, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, first paragraph.

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an enthusiastic tribute to Jesus: 'No figure in Western history has exercised such compulsive fascination, nor for so long, upon the hearts and minds of men.'<sup>1</sup> 'Christianity is, in the main the fact of Jesus . . . That beauty of Life apprehended in all manner of ways has been the chief dynamic influence upon mankind . . . Keep our heads as high as we can, they shall be bowed at the last' (before Jesus).<sup>2</sup> Or as C. E. M. Joad says: 'We know, in fact, that we ought to live very much as Christ enjoined. We may say that Christ's prescription for good living is wholly impracticable or is much too difficult; but that does not alter our conviction that it is the right prescription.'<sup>3</sup> And even C. H. Waddington himself admits: 'I also accept the thesis . . . that the ethical principles formulated by Christ and the great ethical teachers are those which have in the past few thousand years tended towards the further evolution of mankind, and that they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future . . . the Christian ethic, by for the first time combining a deep respect for the individual with a low regard for relations of dominance and submission, released an enormous store of initiative for the arts of peace.'<sup>4</sup>

Let us now return to the question with which we began, namely, the 'newness' or otherwise of the ethical teaching of Jesus. That partial parallels can be found to practically all His teaching in that of Greek philosophers, Buddha, the Stoics, and Jewish writers is undeniable. Klausner declares that 'throughout the Gospels there is not one item of ethical teaching which cannot be paralleled either in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature of the period near to the time of Jesus.'<sup>5</sup> Yet later on he admits that 'there is a new thing in the gospels . . . Jesus gathered together and, so to speak, condensed and concentrated ethical teachings in such a fashion as to make

<sup>1</sup> *God*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus*, pp. 154 f., 161, 316.

<sup>3</sup> *Science and Ethics* (ed. C. H. Waddington), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 384.



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them more prominent than in the Talmudic Haggada and the Midrashim, where they are interspersed among more commonplace discussions and worthless matter. Even in the Old Testament, and particularly in the Pentateuch, where moral teaching is so prominent, and so purged and so lofty, this teaching is yet mingled with ceremonial laws or matters of civil and communal interest which also include ideas of vengeance and harshest reproof. Although there is, in the Mishna, an entire tractate devoted exclusively to ethical teaching . . . it is but a compilation drawing on the saying of many scores . . .; but the ethical teachings of the Gospel, on the contrary, came from one man only, and are, every one, stamped with the same peculiar hall-mark. A man like Jesus, for whom the ethical ideal was everything, was something unheard of in the Judaism of the day.<sup>1</sup> That there are parallels in the Old Testament even to those elements in the teaching of Jesus which are commonly regarded as unique is something which the general reader can easily confirm. One of the central ideas of Jesus, namely that morality was not just a matter of external conduct but rather a condition of the heart, is adumbrated in the words: 'The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' (1 Sam. xvi. 7); and even more clearly in 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts' (Ps. li. 6); but most clearly of all in Jeremiah's conception of the New Covenant: 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts' (xxxii. 33). The repudiation of vindictive passion finds clear expression in the words of Job:

*Ne'er rejoiced I at my enemy's ruin,  
Nor triumphed when evil befel him;  
Nor suffered my mouth to sin,  
By demanding his life in a curse.*

(xxxii. 29-30, McFadyen's translation.)

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* p. 389.

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Even that 'love of enemies' which has been dismissed as an impossible demand, valid only as part of an Interim-ethics [see below, ch. vi (c)] is anticipated in the Book of Proverbs: 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee' (xxv. 21 f.). From the religious point of view, however, it would be disconcerting rather than otherwise if there were no parallels anywhere to the ethical insight of Jesus, for in that case we should have to conclude that, apart from Jesus, God had left Himself without witness. But where is the ethical teacher, in Greece or Palestine or India, who can supply parallels to that ethical insight *at every point*? The newness is to be found in the unique combination of ethical precepts which Jesus presents, a combination which has no parallel anywhere; it is seen not in particular exhortations but in the absolute intensity of His ethics. Jewish parallels to the forbidding of anger, adulterous desire, divorce and retaliation are to be found occasionally in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature; but they were not characteristic of Judaism and not so powerfully formulated as by Jesus. 'No Jewish writing exists which presents an equivalent to the Sermon on the Mount taken as a whole.'<sup>1</sup> Jesus supplied, not so much new ethical precepts, as a new *direction* to the ethical life of man, and invested it with a new *power*. His concern was not to formulate a new moral code but to lead men into such a new relationship with God that they would be endowed with power to do the good they knew. Herein lies the explanation of the obvious fact that no ethical teacher in all history has exercised an influence on the thought and life of mankind in the least degree comparable to that of Jesus.

The ethics of Jesus differs markedly from the ethics of mere moral philosophers, though, at certain points, Christian Ethics and non-religious ethics meet. The ethics of Jesus can be classified

<sup>1</sup> Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, p. 110.

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neither as the 'Ethics of Duty' nor as the 'Ethics of Ends', for it is a combination of the two, 'Duty' being represented by the Will of God, and the 'End' as the realisation of the Kingdom of God. It has certain affinities with many of the various ethical theories which have been propounded. Jesus lays as much stress on 'Life' as the biological theories on 'life'; but, as Middleton Murry has pointed out 'Life' is a very different thing from 'life', a mere biological manifestation. It is nevertheless significant that Jesus has so much to say about Life. 'Man shall not live by bread alone' (Matt. iv. 4). 'For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto Life' (Matt. vii. 14). 'This do, and thou shalt live' (Luke x. 28). 'Life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that a man possesseth' (Luke xii. 15). 'For this son of mine was dead, and is alive again' (Luke xv. 24). Then, too, there is a sort of utilitarian element in the ethics of Jesus. True, He never suggests that pleasure and pain are the criteria of right and wrong. Still less does He imply that pleasure is the end for which men should live. But He does emphatically insist that the results of right-doing are ultimately pleasant to the agent, and those of wrong-doing ultimately painful to the agent; and, after all, 'there is salvation and there is damnation, and these tremendous words express not idle and superstitious fancies, but verities of human life which lie open to the knowledge of any man with the courage to look at the facts of his own experience.'<sup>1</sup> In other respects, the ethical teaching of Jesus is as far from Utilitarianism as the east is far from the west, for He condemns conduct based purely on self-love and self-interest, and appeals for self-denial and self-sacrifice. The 'self-realisation' ethical theory may be said to find expression in a sentence in the Parable of the Prodigal Son: '*And when he came to himself* he said . . . I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight,' (Luke xv. 17 f.). Of the 'Social Convention' theory there is not a vestige,

<sup>1</sup> Middleton Murry, *Jesus*, p. 237.

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for virtue is never in any way represented as conformity to current standards; Jesus summons men not to the 'prudent' but to the 'ideal'. He warns them that unless their righteousness *exceeds* that of the Scribes and Pharisees they can never enter the Kingdom of God. He expects of His disciples that they do *more than others*. He demands of them that instead of following the crowd on the broad road they ought to enter in by the strait gate and tread the narrow way; that instead of taking their moral cue from man they ought to take it from God. And there is a true 'Humanism' in the Sermon on the Mount, but it has a religious basis. Men are urged to be all-inclusive in their goodwill as God is (Matt. v. 44 ff.); to be ready to forgive that they may be forgiven (Matt. vi. 14); to be merciful in their judgment of their fellows that they may obtain mercy (Matt. vii. 1 f.).

One further point calls for notice here. Jesus taught by example as well as by precept. His character and His teaching were in harmony. His own conduct in the matter of almsgiving, prayer and fasting, His personal attitude to money, His freedom from worry and complete dedication to the Kingdom of God and the all-round will of God were in harmony with what He taught. Jewish scholars frequently allege, however, that He failed to be true to His own teaching about the avoidance of contemptuous speech and about the duty of showing love to one's enemies, when He made His scathing attacks on the religious leaders of His day (e.g. Matt. xxiii); and they complain that they search the Gospels in vain for a single kind word about the Pharisees. But an attack on hypocrisy and the debasement of religion is no sign of *personal* hostility or *personal* resentment. Jesus was roused to anger by the ostentatious piety, by the punctilious regard for ceremonial law combined with the frequent monstrous neglect of the moral law, by the harshness in the judgment of others, and by the contempt for the masses of the people, which, *as a matter of fact*, characterised many of those who claimed to be the chief expo-

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nents and representatives of religion; and anger against wrong is a very different thing from anger that is due to sheer personal hatred and to lack of self-control. It is surely an utterly sentimental view of love which supposes that it must always dole out soothing syrup and must never be severe, never speak the plain truth that hurts. Parental severity is often the surest sign and proof of genuine parental love. A true friend, as Emerson pointed out, is not always a mere echo, but sometimes a nettle. Socrates loved the Athenians though, as he confessed, he often played the part of a gadfly to them. Even in the House of Commons, the protagonists in a debate may hurl very bitter words at each other, and each may roundly condemn the other's policy, without any personal rancour or any rupture of the bonds of friendship. Had Jesus not been roused to anger by the things He condemned in Matt. xxiii, had He been mealy-mouthed about them, He would have been guilty of cowardice and the betrayal of the truth of God. So His 'Philippic' was not in any sense a denial of brotherhood or a withholding of love.

Hence, whatever else Jesus was, He was a great ethical teacher. 'The first demand of Jesus is not for orthodoxy, or ecstasy, but for morality.'<sup>1</sup> True as that is, it must not be overlooked that Jesus did not suppose that right thinking and emotional fervour were superfluous. What He maintained was that the *resolve to live rightly* was the surest way to right thinking and fine feeling. His *initial* demand was 'Follow Me', and in the simple, personal, practical following of Jesus the strength of Christianity has always lain and will always lie.

<sup>1</sup> F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, p. 103.

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### (b) THE ETHICS OF JESUS INSEPARABLE FROM THE RELIGION OF JESUS

It is a fairly common idea that the ethics of Jesus could easily be disentangled from His religion and made to stand alone. 'Let us keep the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount and allow the rest to go', said a German to me over thirty years ago. Experience since then suggests that when people 'allow the rest to go', the ethic of Jesus does not survive for very long! There are not a few nowadays who claim that they are weary of churches, uninterested in worship, and impatient of all creeds, who are ready to sacrifice religion in any historic sense of the term, but who profess a certain eagerness to salvage the Christian ethic from the wreckage. Even Klausner, who admits that 'for the Jews their religion was more than simple belief and more than simple moral guidance: it was a *way of life*—all life was embraced in their religion',<sup>1</sup> nevertheless seems anxious to dissociate the ethics of Jesus from the religion of Jesus: 'The main strength of Jesus lay in his ethical teaching. If we omitted the miracles and a few mystical sayings which tend to deify the Son of Man, and preserved only the moral precepts and parables, the Gospels would count as one of the most wonderful collections of ethical teaching in the world.'<sup>2</sup> Though Middleton Murry dismisses the sense of God as an illusion, he admits that 'the coherence and beauty of Jesus' life and teaching was *functionally dependent upon the nature of his beliefs*.'<sup>3</sup> But if, as Murry maintains, Jesus' sense of God was an illusion, His beliefs were an illusion, and Murry is therefore driven to the extraordinary conclusion that the life and teaching of Jesus which he so much admires were 'functionally dependent' upon an illusion! So here again we have another—quite illogical—attempt to separate the ethics of Jesus from His religion.

All the ethical teaching of Jesus is rooted in His religion, in God.

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* p. 381.

<sup>3</sup> *God*, p. 156. (*Italics mine*).

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It is quite true that some of His utterances *seem* to be purely ethical and almost anti-religious, and they were undoubtedly so regarded by the Scribes and Pharisees. He denounces the long prayers of those whose conduct was unethical in spite of their frequent and protracted devotions. In the Parable of the Kind Samaritan, He suggests that to render assistance to a fellow-creature in great distress is a more important matter than attendance at the Temple-worship or regard for ceremonial purity. He befriends those commonly regarded as utterly irreligious—tax-gatherers, sinners, harlots. His bitterest speeches, as we have just seen, are directed against the religious leaders of the day. Yet in all these cases, He is not exalting ethics above religion, and still less separating ethics from religion, but denouncing as false any religion which yields unethical fruit and insisting that true religion leads inevitably to a high ethic. For Him, ethics is part and parcel of religion, and completely inseparable from it, and morality springs out of a new relation to God. Jesus does not argue (like Bishop Butler) from the constitution of man, or (like the Utilitarian) from the necessity of producing the greatest happiness for the greatest number, but He bases ethics entirely on the postulate of faith in God. The 'right' and the 'good' are, for Him, aspects of the Will of God. He finds the source and spring of moral endeavour, and the energising power which makes such endeavour effective, in living communion with God. He calls on men to act like God and thus to show themselves God's children. He constantly appeals to men to endeavour to please God, their Creator and their Lord, to Whom they owe limitless obedience. In this way He solves the problem which non-religious ethics always fails to solve, namely, the problem of the adequate motivation of the moral life and the need of a moral dynamic. To regard the Sermon on the Mount as ethics pure and simple is completely to misunderstand it, for the ethics of that discourse is through and through religious ethics, and the ethical life to which it points is impossible

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of attainment without the help of the religion which inspired it.

The idea that ethics can be separated from religion never occurred to the Hebrew mind. The 'Torah', which controlled every aspect of Hebrew life, was regarded as a divinely given code. Thus, for the Hebrews, religion and ethics were indissolubly joined, and they never conceived of religion as one department and ethics as another. For them, 'the knowledge of God' was both Rule of Faith and Rule of Life. 'The Creator was also the Author of the Moral Law, and, so the prophets taught, had His witness in the human conscience.'<sup>1</sup> The point of view of Jesus is precisely the same. For Him, the central maxim governing all conduct is 'Thy Will be done.' All the moral demands of Jesus are conceived of as the moral requirements of God. His ethic is the ethic of the Kingdom of God, and His moral teaching sets forth the way of the Kingdom, the way in which God's Will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven, the way in which God's earthly subjects show their loyalty to their King. 'His moral and religious principles are so closely interwoven, His moral feeling, for example, His love for man, is so inseverable from the religious basis of His belief in the Fatherhood of God, that it would seem to be impossible to delineate His 'ethics' without at the same time treating of, say, the Kingdom of God, the Divine Grace, or the final Judgment.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus the ethical maxims of Jesus cannot be abstracted from the religion out of which they grow, without being rendered practically useless and theoretically unintelligible.<sup>3</sup> Without the power which a living faith in God supplies, no man can rise to the ethical heights to which the Sermon on the Mount points. Jesus' teaching about the right relations between man and man can be understood only on the religious basis that man is a potential child of

<sup>1</sup> Hensley Henson, *Christian Morality*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. I, p. 543a.

<sup>3</sup> cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 286.



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God. Just as a flower soon withers when it has been severed from the plant which gave it birth, so the ethical teaching of Jesus loses its validity, its cogency, and its practicability, when it is separated from the religion out of which it grew. The ideal picture of human life drawn by Jesus is life in the Kingdom of God, that is, life as lived by men who have come under the rule of God, and acknowledge God as their Creator and King and Lord. Thus in dealing with the ethics of Jesus we are dealing with 'religious' ethics. In the teaching of Jesus, religion and ethics are fused into one indissoluble whole—the religion is inconceivable without the ethics, and the ethics is unintelligible and impracticable without the religion. For Jesus, 'religion is the soul of morality, and morality is the body of religion.'<sup>1</sup>

### (c) THE RELIGIOUS BASIS OF THE ETHICS OF JESUS

The ethical teaching of Jesus consists in practical deductions from religious premises. What, then, are the chief religious premises?

(1). Jesus assumes the reality of a spiritual world. In addition to the world of time and sense, there is a world unseen and eternal. In other words, beyond the temporal physical order there is an eternal moral and spiritual order. Jesus would have agreed with the conception of faith set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews as 'the assurance (*ὑπόστασις*) of things hoped for, the conviction (*ἔλεγχος*) of things not seen.' (xi. 1). It was to this higher order of being that He constantly appealed and of which He sought to make men aware. Now it is obvious that the average man will not take ethics very seriously if he believes that the visible world is the only world there is, that reality is nothing but matter and motion, and that man is just an accidental 'toss-up' from a soulless, purposeless, mechanical cosmic process which cares no more

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 47.

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about human beings than about frogs croaking in a marsh. In such a universe the ethical life of man is an enigma and an illusion. It is just as obvious that a man will attach supreme and paramount importance to ethical considerations if he believes that the physical world is only a part of reality, and the less important part, and that man is a moral and spiritual being with a high destiny, that he is in touch here and now with two worlds—through his sensuous experience with the physical world and through his spiritual powers and capacities and sense of moral obligation with the world of moral and spiritual reality. It was precisely this profound sense of a spiritual world which was fundamental to the ethical teaching of Jesus, and all His ethical ideas were 'functionally dependent' upon it. It was in this spiritual world that, for Jesus, the key to man's future lay. As Wellhausen says: 'In the background of his *Weltanschauung* stands the future perfection of the good and the future destruction of evil, the transformation of weakness into power and glory.'<sup>1</sup> This idea of a higher spiritual order is regarded by many moderns as intellectually disreputable. The solid fact remains, however, that the physical world is not self-explanatory and that all scientific 'explanations' lead to the inexplicable. Further, what is the alternative? The only alternative view is that the whole panorama of creation, together with all the achievements of the human mind and spirit, is to be regarded as a cosmic accident, as the chance product of dead matter, matter suffering from disease in its old age! Is such a view intellectually reputable? Is it even intellectually respectable? Can the mind of man possibly find real rest and satisfaction in such a *Weltanschauung*?

(2). Jesus assumes the reality of God the Creator of the world, Whose Providence broods over creation, the 'Friend behind phenomena'. He is sure that the Universe is not hostile to man or indifferent to him, but friendly. H. G. Wells, commenting on Professor Gilbert Murray's assertion that he suspects that man's

<sup>1</sup> *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte*, p. 385.

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instinctive belief that he is not quite alone in the Universe is a delusion and that the Friend is not there, pertinently asks: 'Does not the truth lie rather in the supposition that it is not the Friend that is the instinctive delusion but the isolation?'<sup>1</sup> F. W. H. Myers once said that the question he would like to put to the Sphinx was: 'Is the Universe friendly?' That question Jesus answers with a confident affirmative. But our main concern here is not so much with the question of Providence as with that of ethics. Jesus finds the main witness to God not in Nature but in the moral experience of man, and thus He holds that it is possible for man not merely to *believe* in God but experientially to *know* Him. 'According to the New Testament it is characteristic of God not that He is the Creator in the general sense of the term, but that He creates the morally good, by drawing men into communion with Himself. Such is the meaning of the Divine Fatherhood: God is not merely the ideal of the good, but also the power that enables man to achieve the good. The more thoroughly the idea of Divine Fatherhood is carried through to its ultimate implications, the more emphatically is the religious relationship regarded as a moral task which ought to be and can be discharged as man, in the power of the consciousness of God which he enjoys, grows into the divine perfection. . . . Jesus draws on His own innermost experience when He discovers and proclaims that God is not only the moral norm but also the source of power in the personal life of the individual, and finds above all in God the Father both the perfect moral ideal and the efficient cause, that is, the creative power behind everything that bears the name of good. Nothing other than that is the religion of Jesus and at the same time also his Ethic.'<sup>2</sup> According to Jesus, God is the ultimate source of all our moral ideas and aspirations and endeavours, and it is through fellowship with God that we gain the power we need to reach the goal of

<sup>1</sup> *The Invisible King*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Holtzmann: *N.T. Theologie*, Vol. I, pp. 223 and 225.

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our moral striving—and there is no other valid explanation of the ethical life of man and no other source of that re-inforcement which is essential to ethical effort. Hence the extraordinary emphasis which Jesus lays on a living faith in the living God, on *fides miraculosa*—though such faith be as a mere grain of mustard seed it can be the medium of the energy necessary for the removal of mountains of difficulty from our moral path, and no moral achievement will prove impossible. (Matt. xvii. 20.)

(3). Jesus regards all men as God's creatures, potential members of God's Kingdom, capable of becoming God's children by sharing in God's likeness. 'First through Jesus Christ has the value of every single human soul become manifest.'<sup>1</sup> In various ways Jesus gives expression to His unique sense of human value. Man is more important than so sacred an institution as the Sabbath. 'The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.' (Mark ii. 27.). There is a worth in man's life that other creatures do not possess, 'You are of much more value than sparrows' (adopting πολλῶ a conjectural emendation for πολλῶν, Matt. x. 31); and if it is right to go to the assistance of a sheep on the Sabbath, how much more right must it be to heal a man on the Sabbath (Matt. xii. 12). There are moral and spiritual values in the human soul which outweigh in worth all the material treasure of the world (Mark viii. 36). So does Jesus stress human value and the sacredness of human life. Our dealings with others, therefore, must be determined by the sense that they are God's creatures too. No man is entitled to use a human being as a mere tool for his own ends. (Compare Kant: Treat every rational being, including yourself, as an end and never as a mere means.) Every human being, as God's creature and potential child, has value, spiritual dignity, rights and interests that others should respect. Hence Jesus denounces all forms of oppression. He declares that it is better for a man to have a millstone tied around his neck and

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 44.

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to be drowned in the depths of the sea than that he should take advantage of the weak (Matt. xviii. 6). Harsh judgments are forbidden—if we show no mercy to our fellows, we shall obtain no mercy from God; and if we refuse to forgive we shall not be forgiven. In all our intercourse with men, we are to remember that they belong to God and are, therefore, entitled to consideration and respect and to the control of their own lives. Since every man is God's creature, it follows that all men together constitute a single family, and that distinctions of race, nationality, wealth, class, culture and social position are arbitrary and unreal, and do not affect a man's standing with God. Thus Jesus stands for the infinite value and the sacred rights of human personality. It is obvious that when men appropriate such a view of human personality, it exercises a profound and far-reaching effect on their conduct, both personal and social. When men lose the sense of the value and sacredness of their own lives, they tend to become morally indifferent or even morally reckless, and they are apt cynically to conclude that it is a matter of no consequence whatever they do, for all the dignity and greatness of human life have, for them, turned to ashes. As for the social consequences of the denial of the value and sacredness of human life, we have had glaring examples in our own day in the behaviour of the Nazis, who have treated human beings like so many driven cattle, and killed them like flies. It is the same denial which leads to the racial prejudice which looks down with truculent scorn on those of alien stock; to the industrial cruelty which treats men as tools; to the militarism which sees no more in a baby boy than a potential soldier, or in a baby girl no more than the potential mother of a soldier, and regards young men as so much food for the guns; to the lust which uses human beings for the purpose of sensual gratification; to the social pride which tramples arrogantly on the lowly; and to the selfishness which plays with human beings as though they were mere pawns in a game of chess.

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In this sense of human value and of the sacredness of human life we have one of the main contributions which Jesus of Nazareth has made to the nobler side of our Western civilisation. The idea has worked like leaven. All the great social reformers, John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln, Lord Shaftesbury and William Booth, Father Damien and David Livingstone, Thomas Barnardo and Booker Washington, did their life-work under its inspiration. It is one of the driving forces even behind Democracy, Socialism and Communism, in so far as they champion the rights of the common man.

Jesus stressed human value because He thought in terms of what, as a matter of fact, any human being, by the grace of God, might become. It is a mere commonplace that ordinary people are capable of rising to extraordinary heights of moral and spiritual splendour;

*Plowmen, shepherds have I found and more than once and still  
could find,  
Sons of God and Kings of Men in utter nobleness of mind.*<sup>1</sup>

It was precisely because Jesus regarded men as creatures made in God's image and likeness, as God's potential sons, as so constituted that they could find no real satisfaction except in goodness and in God, as kinsmen of God however 'fallen' they were, that He displayed such faith in man and made such tremendous demands of him. Jesus did not conceive of man as by nature separated from God—this idea was Greek in origin and reappears in Barthianism to-day. On the contrary, He recognised that there was high moral capacity in man, that man was by his very nature fitted for fellowship with God, and that only through such fellowship could he attain the highest ends of his being. When the Rich Ruler asked, 'What am I to do that I may inherit life eternal?' Jesus did not demur. Instead of pointing out, as St. Paul would

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After*.

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probably have done, that eternal life is the free gift of God's grace and not something a man can earn by anything he *does*, Jesus assumed that it was within the Rich Man's power to qualify for eternal life. When, in reply to Jesus' question, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I drink of, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' the sons of Zebedee confidently affirmed 'We can', He did not point out that they were making a fair promise beyond their ability to perform, but just took them at their word. He regarded it as within man's power to banish hatred from his heart, to suppress lustful thinking and desiring, to do to others as he wished others to do to him, to waive all claims for vengeance, to love his enemies, and so to share in the moral perfections of God Who causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. In spite of the exacting nature of these moral demands, He declared that the yoke He laid on man was easy, and the burden He gave them to carry was light (Matt. xi. 30). In the parables about the man who began to build a tower but was unable to finish it and the king who hesitated to go to war unless he was sure he could triumph over the enemy (Luke xiv. 28 ff.), Jesus made it clear that those who felt that they could not pay the price should not think of becoming disciples. 'As in private and political life a man ventures on a great task only when he has first thoroughly scrutinised his resources as to whether they are adequate for its accomplishment—and unless he is to involve himself in serious injury he can only thus venture—so a man can venture to become a disciple of mine only when he has first made sure, by the most rigorous self-examination, that his powers, that is, his capacity to sacrifice what is dear to him and to perform the tasks of discipleship, are adequate. A rash plunge in either case must lead to the gravest consequences; and it is better not to begin than after having begun to withdraw in despondency or despair because one's powers fail.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, Vol. II, p. 208.

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Here, again, Jesus appears to assume that it is actually within any man's power to be a disciple if he is willing to pay the price.

In view of all this evidence it is clear why it is sometimes affirmed that Jesus took a more optimistic view of human nature than St. Paul, for Jesus credits man with moral assets while the apostle regards him as almost morally bankrupt. But the real contrast between the two views of human nature does not lie here, for Jesus was not really more optimistic about man than St. Paul. Some of the saddest words ever uttered about man fell from the lips of Jesus. He was aware that there were men in the world who were so impervious to moral and spiritual appeal that to address such an appeal to them was like giving the holy to dogs and casting pearls before swine (Matt. vii. 6). He was so appalled at the way in which some men deliberately sought to compass the ruin of others that He declared that if millstones were hanged about their necks and they were drowned in the depths of the sea, they would get a less severe punishment than they deserved. (Matt. xviii. 6.) He was quite alive to the evil forces which were at work in human hearts and ready, if occasion were given to them, to pollute human lives. (Mark vii. 21 ff.) The Parable of the Sower bears witness to the fact that Jesus was fully conscious of His failure permanently to influence a great host of people, the hard-hearted, the highly emotional, and those who allowed secular interests to strangle their spiritual life. He noted with sorrow that those who passed through the strait gate and trod the narrow way leading to Life were few in number, and that the vast majority preferred the wide gate and the spacious road leading to destruction. (Matt. vii. 13 f.) Many, He said, were called, but few alas! were chosen. (Matt. xxii. 14.) That, in Jesus, there was no facile optimism about human nature such remarks as these conclusively prove.

The real contrast between Jesus and the Apostle on this question lies in their respective views as to the root of the trouble. Jesus



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held *that man could lead the good life if he would*<sup>1</sup> while St. Paul held *that man would lead the good life if he could*. As one would expect the truer insight was with Jesus. Who would, for one moment, assert that the misdemeanours of men are, on the whole, due to the fact that though they yearn and strive to do what is good, evil is all that they can manage? Does not the main trouble lie in the will, in the lack of desire for and aspiration after goodness? That is not to deny that there are people who genuinely desire the good life but find themselves unable to achieve it, and it was that type of experience which the apostle had in mind when he exclaimed: 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.' (Rom. vii. 21.) But even in such a case the real trouble still lies in the will, for the will is somehow divided, as it was in the case of Augustine when he prayed for purity and self-control, and forthwith added 'but not just yet.' The will to good is deflected from its goal by the greater force of instinct and impulse. Coué used to say that whenever the will and the imagination are at war it is the imagination that carries off the victory. But *if the will to good were stronger* it would triumph completely over impulse and passion and imagination. Hence the real cause of moral failure is still to be found (where Jesus found it) in the will. St. Paul's passionate cry for redemption ('Who will deliver me?', Rom. vii. 24) is in the last analysis a cry for some power that will so reinforce his will to good as to enable it to sweep all obstacles aside as chaff is scattered by the wind.

The two views, therefore, are not so far apart after all. Jesus found the cause of moral evil in the will; and the Apostle's confession that, in his pre-Christian days, his will to good was not strong enough to resist natural impulses and passions, shows that for him, too, the cause of moral evil lay in the weakness of the will to good. And what about the cure? It is quite false to represent Jesus as teaching salvation simply and solely through human

<sup>1</sup> cf. 'You *would* not', Matt. xxiii. 37.

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obedience and St. Paul as teaching that salvation comes simply and solely through the power of God. Jesus assumes all the way through His ethical teaching that the good man is one who is in touch with God and therefore knows the power of God in his own experience. He conceives of faith as a link between the life of man and the life of God, a link that unites man's weakness to God's might, and thus enables him triumphantly to achieve what would otherwise prove unattainable. 'With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible' (Mark x. 27)—words which in their context imply that God is able to perform such a miracle in the heart of a rich man as to render it easy even for him to enter the Kingdom of God. It is therefore clear that, while Jesus stresses the demand for obedience on man's part, He does not for a moment leave out of His reckoning the power of God at work in the good man's life. And just as it is a sheer travesty of the facts of the case to represent Jesus as teaching a mere 'obedience-ethics' (as some German scholars do), so it is no less a travesty to represent St. Paul as teaching that the power of God at work in the heart does everything, and that the obedience of the good man plays no part at all. The Apostle says of himself: 'Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision' (Acts xxvi. 19). So far from assuming that God does everything, he urges the Philippians to 'work at' (not 'out') their own salvation with fear and trembling 'for it is God who is active in you enabling you to will this and to achieve it.' (Phil. ii. 13.) He speaks of conversion as '*obedience* to the faith' (Rom. i. 5; xv. 18). He describes loyalty to the Christian faith and ethic as '*obedience*' (Rom. xvi. 19). The ethical life at its highest might be compared to an ellipse whose two foci are the experience of the power of God and the obedience of man. Jesus largely assumes the former and stresses the latter; St. Paul largely assumes the latter and lays the stress on the former. For both alike, the power of God and the obedience of man are essential to the

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good life, and whatever the difference in form and emphasis, the substance of their teaching is the same. They both regard man as a creature who is so constituted that he realises the highest ends of his being only when of his own free will he obediently submits to God's sway, and lives his life under divine governance and by divine power.

### (d) THE CENTRALITY OF THE IDEA OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

That the idea of the Kingdom of God played a conspicuous part in the thought and teaching of Jesus is clear from every page of the Synoptic Gospels. He defined His gospel as the gospel of the Kingdom. His parables are almost all parables of the Kingdom. The model prayer He taught His disciples included the petition: 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' The history of the idea of the Kingdom has often been sketched,<sup>1</sup> so there is no need to go over that ground again. Far more important than the history of the idea is the part that it played in the thought of Jesus. To give a systematic account of that is quite impossible, for He thought and spoke of the Kingdom of God in so many different ways that to harmonise them and present them systematically is out of the question. To a considerable extent He shared the current views about the Kingdom, but, as in the case of such terms as 'Messiah', 'Son of Man', He often invested the term 'Kingdom of God' with a meaning peculiarly His own. Hence the apparently contradictory notions which are so baffling to the modern reader of the Gospels. The Kingdom of God is presented as external and internal, as present and future. There is probably a good deal of truth in Middleton Murry's contention: 'To define and classify Jesus' thought [about the Kingdom of God] is impossible; it has to be seized by an act of imagination from the vantage point within. Then it becomes irrelevant to ask whether

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Rudolf Otto, *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn*, E. F. Scott, *The Kingdom of God*.

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Jesus conceived the Kingdom of God as supernatural or natural, as timeless or in time. There is no answer to such questions, because Jesus' mind moved on a plane where such antitheses have no meaning.<sup>1</sup> Anybody who has ever attempted to 'define and classify' the conceptions of the Kingdom of God in the Gospels will sympathise with Murry's viewpoint. But as our theme is the *ethical* teaching of Jesus, our primary concern is with the connection between Jesus' idea of the Kingdom of God and Ethics, and here it is possible to reach certain definite conclusions which are as clear as crystal.

We will take as the *locus classicus* for our present theme the famous passage to be found in Luke xvii. 20-21: 'On being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, he said to them in his reply, the Kingdom of God does not come by watching for it (*μετὰ παρατηρήσεως*), and people will not say, See, it is here, or See it is there. For see, the Kingdom of God is within you (*ἐντὸς ὑμῶν*).' Unfortunately the meaning of this passage is very much disputed, though if it is approached with a perfectly open mind and allowed to speak for itself, its signification can hardly be in doubt. Many prefer to render the *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν* 'among you' 'in your midst',<sup>2</sup> on the grounds (i) that Jesus would not be likely to tell the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God was within *them*, and (ii) that the Kingdom of God is not usually spoken of as an inward spiritual reality, but is generally thought of eschatologically. To take the latter point first, it is foolish to assume that Jesus always used so fluid a term as the Kingdom of God in one sense, and by such an assumption we are certain to miss His own pecu-

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Bousset in his *Jesus* (p. 36), suggests that the present tense (*ἐστίν*) should be treated as a prophetic present and that the word 'suddenly' should be added: 'For see, the Kingdom of God will (suddenly) be among you.' So also Klostermann, *Handbuch z. N.T., Das Lukas-Evangelium*, p. 175. If this interpretation is correct, by this saying Jesus encouraged the very 'watching' for the Kingdom which He had just discouraged!

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liar insight into the meaning of the term and to accommodate all His thought about the Kingdom to contemporary Jewish ideas. The idea of the Kingdom as an inward spiritual reality was no bolt from the blue, for even the Rabbis taught that a man could take the Kingdom upon himself, by obediently submitting to it, and by acknowledging the commands of God both in willing and in doing.<sup>1</sup> And St. Paul was quite familiar with the idea, for he says: 'The Kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. xiv. 17). As for the former point, there is no reason in the world why Jesus should not say, in effect, to the Pharisees: 'You are always watching for signs in the heavens of the coming of the Kingdom, the place to look for the Kingdom is within you.' 'That Jesus says this to the Pharisees, his opponents, need cause no surprise. He made the contrast without regard to the fact that the persons addressed would not be amongst the members of the Kingdom.'<sup>2</sup> Further, if ἐντός ὑμῶν means 'among you', why does Jesus point out that people will not be able to locate it as 'here' or 'there', or to perceive it by 'watching' for it? It is only in this passage that ἐντός occurs as a preposition in the whole of the New Testament. (It occurs also once as a noun, τὸ ἐντός τοῦ ποτηρίου, the *inside* of the cup, Matt. xxiii. 26.) The more natural way to express the idea of 'among you' would surely be ἐν ὑμῖν. According to one of the newly discovered sayings of Jesus, He used the phrase ἐντός ὑμῶν on another occasion, where it clearly can only mean 'within you': 'The Kingdom of God is within you, and whoever knows himself will find it.'<sup>3</sup> In another reference in the papyri, the meaning of the word can only be 'within', τὸ συμπόσιον καὶ τὴν ἐντός αὐτοῦ κέλλαν, 'the dining-room and the store-chamber within it.'<sup>4</sup> In late Greek the meaning of ἐντός was usually 'within'. That ἐντός means 'within' in the passage under consideration is further borne

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Otto, op. cit. p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Feine, *N.T. Theologie*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> P oxy IV, p. 654, quoted by *M.M.* s.v.

<sup>4</sup> P oxy VIII, p. 1128, *ibid.*

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out by the reference to *μετὰ παρατηρήσεως*, 'by watching for it' (*παρατηρέω*, watch closely). The whole point of the phrase is that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of observation, something that can be seen to be 'here' or 'there'. So the meaning is clearly, 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' Wellhausen renders it: 'The Kingdom of God comes not by waiting for it, it is inside you (inwendig in euch)'.<sup>1</sup> Harnack finds in this conception of the Kingdom as 'a quiet, mighty divine power in the heart'<sup>2</sup> Jesus' own peculiar contribution to thought about the Kingdom. Whatever ideas on the subject He may have gleaned from His contemporaries, this idea was absolutely His own. 'He who wishes to know what the Kingdom of God and the coming of this Kingdom signify in the preaching of Jesus, must read and ponder over his parables. Then he will realise what it is all about. The Kingdom of God comes as it comes to individuals, finds entrance into their souls, and they grasp it. The Kingdom of God is the rule of God, to be sure, but it is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of individuals, it is God Himself in His power. Everything dramatic in the external and historical sense has here disappeared; gone too is the whole external future-hope. Take what parable you like, the Sower, the Pearl of Great Price, the Treasure in the Field—the Word of God, He Himself is the Kingdom, and the question at issue is not angels and devils, not thrones and principalities, but God and the soul, the soul and its God.'<sup>3</sup> To insist that 'within you' is the meaning of *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν* is not to deny that Jesus often spoke of the arrival of the Kingdom as an external event eschatologically conceived—for, of this, the reference in the Lord's Prayer is the most familiar example. What is denied is the notion that He always conceived of the Kingdom of God in exactly the same way—eschatologically. It is of interest to note that Ephraem the Syrian interpreted *ἐντὸς ὑμῶν* as meaning 'in your hearts', and Luther translated it 'inwendig in euch.'

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 36.

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In this conception of the Kingdom of God in the heart, religion and ethics meet. God takes the initiative and comes to the soul of man with a transcendent moral claim. When a man recognises that claim, and voluntarily surrenders himself to it, he has come under the rule of God, and thus the Kingdom of God is established within him. It cannot be too strongly insisted that 'the Kingdom of God' means primarily 'the rule of God',<sup>1</sup> so that the Kingdom of God is realised when men voluntarily accept the rule of God as the law of their lives. It is in this way that the living God enters into the living experience of man, for man thus experiences God as the light of the mind, and finds in obedient fellowship with God the strength and the inspiration of life. As H. G. Wells says, God thus becomes 'as real as a bayonet thrust or an embrace . . . Nothing but utter blindness of the spirit can shut a man off from God.'<sup>2</sup> It is this inner light that is the quintessence of religious experience. When a man finds it and walks in it, his life is redeemed from purposelessness. 'To realise God in one's heart is to be filled with the desire to serve him, and the way of his service is neither to pull up one's life by the roots nor to continue it in all its essentials unchanged but to turn it about, to turn everything that there is in it round into his way.'<sup>3</sup> We thus gain high ethical ideals and establish contact with a Power that enables us progressively to realise them. So long as we regard our ideals as our own, in all our ethical endeavours we are simply trying to raise ourselves by tugging at our own bootstraps. But the initiative in the remaking of personality cannot come from within the personality that is to be remade. When, however, we recognise and surrender ourselves to God's transcendent claim upon us, our ideals are no longer our own, but His ideals for us, and we become conscious of His power working with us. 'The recognition and fulfilment of

<sup>1</sup> On this point see *S.B.* Vol. I, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> *The Invisible King*, pp. 67 and 184.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 125.

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moral claims is the result of the activity of God, a religious transaction.<sup>1</sup> The real secret of the Kingdom of God is, therefore, very simple. That is why Jesus says that a man can enter the Kingdom of God only as he has a childlike heart, that is, only as he is receptive. 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you' (Matt. vii. 7). The secret is hidden from the 'wise and prudent', but is revealed to 'babes'. Just because of its simplicity many miss it altogether. In spite of its simplicity, however, it is the most precious thing in life, the master-key to all the main problems of life, for when a man is under the rule of God, that is in the Kingdom, or, as Jesus put it, when the Kingdom is in him, he has an inward Monitor and Guide to direct his steps aright. His moral duties in private life, in family life, in professional or business life, as a citizen, and as a member of the world community, are made clear to him. On all the central issues of life, he takes his moral cue from God. The will of God is registered in his inner life, the law of God is written on his heart. In the Kingdom of God within him, he has the compass and the chart by which he can steer his course across life's sea. That is why the Kingdom of God is so unspeakably precious, the most valuable thing that any man can possess. 'The Kingdom of God is like a man who is a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; and when he had found a very costly pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' (Matt. xiii. 45 f.)

It is clear that the Kingdom of God can come to society (with the result that God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven), *only* as it comes to individuals. Thus, when Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would be established on the earth, He did not, and could not give any date. All he could do was to point out the only way in which it would or could come, namely, as it was realised in the hearts of individuals. He was confident that the Kingdom would at some future time be consum-

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen, *op. cit.* p. 384.



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mated by God, just as it had actually been begun in the present, and He regarded it as His task to sow the seeds of it. It would be quite fallacious to infer from the words 'The Kingdom of God is within you' that Jesus supposed that the Kingdom was *only* within men, a *purely* subjective experience; what He did hold was that the objective event could be brought to pass only through its subjective attainment.

*All the ethical teaching of Jesus is simply an exposition of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, of the way in which men inevitably behave when they actually come under the rule of God.* 'The Kingdom of God was for Him the condition of affairs in which the absolute rule of God was established on earth as it is in heaven. Hence He demands of men the complete fulfilment of the will of God. 'Ye shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.' Thus He is conscious that He is introducing a new and better righteousness.'<sup>1</sup> He attributes all moral evil to the self-will that knows not the rule of God. Though He points the way to the 'new and better righteousness' of the Kingdom of God, yet He is aware that it is not really 'new', but that He is telling men what they already know, and that if they were wide awake and truly knew themselves, they would acknowledge the soundness of His ethical teaching. 'And why, indeed, do you not decide of yourselves (that is, in your own hearts) what is right?' (Luke xii. 57). 'The Kingdom of God is within you, and whoever knows himself will find it.' And who that knows his own heart can fail—in his better moments, at least—to be aware of a transcendent moral claim made upon him? And who that faces honestly and without prejudice the ultimate implications of that claim can fail to realise that he is in touch with a Power, not himself, making for righteousness? Jesus brings religion and ethics down from the clouds of speculation and theory and bases them on the rock foundation of the innermost experience of man at his best.

<sup>1</sup> Feine, op. cit. p. 159.

## CHAPTER II

### JESUS' VIEW OF EVIL

In religious and theological circles there is a great deal of talk about 'sin' that is somewhat unreal, but nobody can listen to what Jesus has to say about it, though He rarely uses the word 'sin' (in our records only on three occasions), without recognising that He is dealing with a grim reality. What, then, is His teaching about moral evil, which, when it is regarded as an offence against God, is called 'sin'?

#### (a) INORDINATE SELF-LOVE AS THE ROOT OF ALL SIN

T. H. Huxley once wrote: 'Men agree in one thing, and that is to enjoy the pleasures and to escape the pains of life; and, in short, to do nothing but that which it pleases them to do, without the least reference to the welfare of the society into which they were born.'<sup>1</sup> A more exact account of Jesus' view of the nature of moral evil could hardly be given. He traces all the moral evil of the world to the tendency of men to care for themselves too much and for their neighbours too little. And just as men can serve God only by engaging in some form of service of their fellows, so all offences against men are offences against God, and therefore 'sins'. Sin is a tree with a great many branches, but it has only one root, namely, the inordinate love of self, the tendency of the human Ego to concentrate all its attention upon its own maintenance and the furtherance of its private ends. The self-love which Jesus regards as the source and spring of all evil is not Bishop Butler's cool and reasonable self-love—that is allowed for in the maxim

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 27.

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'Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*', which shows that what Jesus aimed at was not so unreasonable a thing as the complete elimination of self-love, but its complete subordination to the love of God and man. The self-love which He condemns is that unlimited and unchecked self-love that takes nothing and nobody—neither God nor man—into its calculations but Self. From this kind of self-centredness and self-regard arise all the follies and vices and crimes of men. There is no sin in all the world which is not an expression of undue self-love.

All the sins of individuals are found, on examination, to arise from inordinate self-love. That is particularly clear in regard to the sins of the flesh, for it is obvious that all who are guilty of private vice, social vice, greed, gluttony, or drunkenness, are actuated by an unbridled love of themselves. All crimes of violence and crimes of fraud are attributable to the same cause. The same is true of all sins of the spirit. Vanity is *self*-admiration, Narcissism. Arrogance is extravagant *self*-esteem. Jealousy and envy, sullen anger and hatred are wrongful forms of *self*-assertion. Deceitfulness and untruthfulness are attempts to win illicit advantages for the *self*. Sloth and faithlessness spring from the desire to secure ease for the *self*. Peevishness and bad temper are mere animal reactions of resentment to relieve the disordered feelings of the *self*. Vaulting ambition is an expression of the desire to exalt the *self* over others. Thus, whenever and however we sin, the ultimate cause is to be found in inordinate self-love.

All the social evils that have made life a bitter thing for millions through the ages have sprung from excessive self-love. The institution of slavery was kept alive so long because there were people in the world who loved themselves so much that they snatched at the chance of securing cheap labour—and, thereby, ease for themselves. In the pre-Plimsoll days there were shipping firms that sent to sea highly-insured but rotten ships, and so long as they laid their hands on the hard cash they cared little or nothing about

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the poor sailors who foundered in mid-ocean—to such wicked extremes does the inordinate love of self drive men. All the evils associated with the exploitation of child-labour, with the grinding down of the worker in mills and factories, with the white-slave traffic, with the cornering of commodities to force up prices, with the adulteration of food, with the 'black market', with excessive profits and exorbitant fees, are due ultimately to excessive self-love. Wherever there is a social evil, inordinate love of self is its root.

International troubles are all due to self-love on a national scale. The excessive patriotism which ignores the rights and interests of other nations, policies of economic autarky, imperialistic aggression, international gangsterism, the cynical violation of solemn pacts and covenants, the dismissal of treaties as mere 'scraps of paper', and the adoption of such principles as 'Right or wrong, it is my country' ('Recht oder Unrecht, mein Vaterland', was the inscription over the entrance to Buchenwald concentration camp), or 'Not kennt kein Gebot', all the causes, in short, of international rivalry and hatred and bloodshed, together with the boundless suffering and sorrow which they bring in their train, are due to national egoism, limitless national self-love.

Hence Jesus displays profound ethical insight when He sees in ruthless egoism the one cause of all the manifold moral ills which bedevil the lives of men. How He mocks at the egoist in the Parable of the Rich Man: 'What am *I* to do, for *I* have no place where *I* can gather together *my* fruits? This will *I* do; *I* will pull down *my* barns, and greater ones will *I* build, and there will *I* collect all *my* corn and *my* goods; and *I* will say to *my* soul, Soul, thou hast many goods stored up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry' (Luke xii. 17-19). Such utter self-absorption was abhorrent to Jesus. He insists that it is only as men forget themselves that they can ever attain Life. 'Whoever seeks to keep his life for himself, will lose it; but whoever loses it, will preserve

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it' (Luke xvii. 33). He makes self-denial the first condition of discipleship, 'If any man wishes to come after me, let him deny himself' (*ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτόν*). Here the reference is not to petty acts of what is commonly called 'self-denial', but to something far more drastic. The axe is to be laid at the very root of the tree of evil, namely, excessive love of self; life is no longer to revolve round the self as its centre, but round the love of God and the love of man; self is to be torn from life's throne, and God and neighbour are to be put in its place; love is no longer to be a mere centripetal force—directed wholly inwards, to the self; it is also to be a centrifugal force—directed outwards to God and man; there is to be a radical change in interest and care, which, instead of being concentrated on the self, are to be lavished on God and man. To 'deny oneself', therefore, is to recognise, acknowledge and accept the claims of God and of one's fellowmen, to subordinate self-interest to the love of God and man. This idea of 'self-denial' was something new in Ethics, and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, as a means to social good, is the central idea of Christian morality.

It is from this vantage point that we see the innermost meaning of Jesus' call to repentance (*μετάνοια*)—there is to be a complete change of mind, change of front, a redirection of interest and love and care. When a man repents he stops thinking of and caring for himself alone; and takes God and his neighbour into all his thoughts and into all his decisions in matters of conduct. The rule of self is abandoned for the voluntary acceptance of the rule of God.

In line with this emphasis on the renunciation of the undivided love of self is the insistence of Jesus on the greatness of service. According to the standards of this world, greatness consists in power over the lives of others, wealth and high social status. According to Jesus, the greatest man in the world is the man who serves God and his fellows best and most. The motto of the blind

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king of Bohemia (and of the Prince of Wales' feathers), is the motto of every man who denies himself, 'Ich dien', 'I serve', for he lives not just for himself, but to glorify God by the service of his fellows.

To sum up, the real seat of sin is to be found not in heredity or in environment, or in anything that other people may say or do—contributory factors as these things usually are—but in the Ego that is absorbed in the love of itself.

### (b) THE SINS OF THE FLESH

Jesus has comparatively little to say about the sins of the flesh. He *seems*, at times, almost to have regarded them with a certain amount of tolerance, and He certainly did not consider them the worst sins. He readily forgave the woman brought to Him guilty of adultery, caught, as her accusers said, in the very act (*ἐπαντοφώρω*), (John vii. 53–viii. 11). The textual history of this passage is curious. It is omitted by all the chief MSS except one—the Bezan Codex. In one group of minuscules (the Lake group), it occurs at the end of John's Gospel, while in another (the Ferrar group), it is placed after Luke xxi. 38. Many of the MSS. which contain the passage mark it with an asterisk as doubtful or place it in the margin or add it on new leaves. In vocabulary and style it is Lucan rather than Johannine. This curious textual history is to be regarded not as signifying the doubtful authenticity of the passage, but rather as a reflection of the attitude taken to it by the early Church, which seems to have feared that it would prove subversive of moral discipline. The leniency of Jesus is somewhat surprising and perhaps many felt that a story of this kind would encourage moral laxity; they thought, as Augustine suggests, that *peccandi impunitatem dari mulieribus*.<sup>1</sup> Jesus also accepted the ministrations of a woman who was apparently notorious for her lack of virtue

<sup>1</sup> *de conjug. adult.* 2, 7; quoted by Bauer, *Das Johannes-Evangelium*, p. 112.

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(Luke vii. 36-50). He scandalised the religious leaders of the day by His free and friendly intercourse with those who were designated 'tax-collectors and sinners', and He dumbfounded them with the declaration that tax-collectors and harlots would enter the Kingdom of God before them (Matt. xxi. 31).

There are various reasons why Jesus dealt so seldom with the sins of the flesh. For one thing, personal purity was a matter taken for granted in Jewish circles. Everybody was prepared to admit that it was a *duty* to abstain from adultery, fornication, and sodomy—whether he actually refrained from these things or not. The Rabbis condemned all sexual gratification outside the marriage-bond, and there were no 'holy women' attached to the Temple of Jehovah. No Jew argued, as many Greeks did, that vice was natural and inevitable, and that there was no moral wrong in it but that it was solely a response to a call of nature. Hence St. Paul has far more to say than Jesus about the sins of the flesh, for he was dealing with Gentiles, amongst whom moral laxity was rife, both in theory and in practice, as was not the case with the Jews. Again, Jesus appears to have recognised that the sins of the flesh are not to be cured by fierce denunciation of them. Bad passions can be cast out and kept out only by putting good ones in their place. Thus Jesus associated with the morally disreputable and sought to inspire them with new ideals and purposes and to kindle in their breasts a passion for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness which would automatically expel their sensual inclinations. Once more, Jesus was dealing with people who, for the most part, supposed that, so long as they kept themselves free from the grosser sins of the flesh, they were virtuous, 'whole' people who did not need the attention of any moral physician. That was precisely what Jesus denied. The pride of the Pharisee was in His view a deadlier sin and more difficult to heal than the sudden moral lapse of a weak and erring woman. True as it is that the sins of the flesh are more disgusting and revolting than the sins

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of the spirit, yet the sins of the spirit are more serious and more harmful to the soul. The man who prides himself that he has never been guilty of adultery or fornication or drunkenness but who is persistently proud and arrogant and vindictive is a sinner of a deeper dye than the man whose chief fault is that he occasionally errs by yielding to sensual impulse or by excessive conviviality. As Professor Taylor says: 'The "dirtiest" sins of civilised men are regularly sexual offences of various kinds, though the users of this language may be quite alive to the truth that aberrations commonly directly connected with unhappy physical constitution or condition—as these offences usually are—are far less ruinous to the moral life of the soul than the great "spiritual" sins—pride, cruelty, fraud, treachery. Cruelty is, as all moralists would admit, a more evil thing than any kind of mere perverted carnal appetite, and if we were angels, would presumably revolt us more. Yet in man, it seems clear, though calculating cruelty may awaken the severer reflective condemnation, it has to be excessive indeed before it arouses anything like the same *disgust*.'<sup>1</sup> As he points out, it was because Dante regarded spiritual sins as more serious than carnal sins, that Ulysses was placed lower in Hell than Cleopatra. It was, therefore, a perfectly sound ethical judgment on Jesus' part that while He chastened carnal sins with whips, He beat spiritual sins with scorpions.

It would certainly be a gross error to suppose that Jesus regarded the sins of the flesh with a light indifference. He roundly condemned lustful thinking and desiring as well as lustful acts and deemed them a breach of the seventh commandment. 'Every man who looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matt. v. 28). More impressive still is the passage in which He declares (speaking hyperbolically), that it is better to cut off a physical member than to allow it to become an occasion of fleshly sin. 'And if thy hand cause thee to stumble,

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. Vol. I, p. 192.



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cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into Life maimed rather than with two hands to depart into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into Life lame rather than with two feet to be cast into Gehenna. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out. It is better for thee to enter one-eyed into the Kingdom of God than with two eyes to be flung into Gehenna, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched' (Mark ix. 43-48). There could hardly be a more solemn warning against using members of the body for sinful purposes. That the language is figurative and not literal (as Origen supposed), is clear from the fact that Jesus found sin's lair in the heart, so that it cannot be got rid of by mutilating the flesh. But though His words here are not to be taken literally, they are to be taken seriously. Sins of the flesh, He implies, expose men to appalling danger, to a remorse that devours and wastes like a worm that is never still, and scorches like a fire that no water can ever quench—as many have discovered (and are discovering) in their own actual experience. Such sins cut a man off from 'Life', and shut up the Kingdom of God against him. Jesus means that no restraint is too drastic and no self-discipline too severe in order to avoid using the body for sinful purposes. Echoes of this teaching are to be found in St. Paul's 'Stop presenting the members of your body as the instruments of unrighteousness to sin; but present yourselves once for all to God' (Rom. vi. 13). 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship' (Rom. xii. 1). 'I beat my body black and blue and make a slave of it, lest, after summoning other people to the Christian race, I should be disqualified myself' (1 Cor. ix. 27).

So whether the teaching of Jesus is acceptable to 'emancipated moderns' or not, there is no doubt that He was opposed to both adultery and fornication and regarded sexual love as allowable

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only within the bounds of marriage—the very thing which so many now-a-days deny, claiming that the pleasures of sex are perfectly harmless and can be freely indulged in outside marriage without any sense of sin or shame. But this new freedom does not appear to be making even for greater happiness, apart from its baneful effects on the moral and spiritual life and its evil social results. 'If love has come to be less often a sin, it has come also to be less often a supreme privilege. If one turns to the smarter of those novelists who describe the doings of the more advanced set of those who are experimenting with life—to, for example, Mr. Aldous Huxley, or Mr. Ernest Hemingway—one will discover in their tragic farces the picture of a society which is at bottom in despair because, though it is more completely absorbed in the pursuit of love than in anything else, it has lost the sense of any importance inherent in the experience which preoccupies it; and if one turns to the graver of intellectual writers—to, for example, Mr. D. H. Lawrence, Mr. T. S. Eliot or Mr. James Joyce—one will find both explicitly and implicitly a similar sense that the transcendental value of love has become somehow attenuated, and that, to take a perfectly concrete example, a conclusion which does no more than bring a man and woman into complete possession of one another is a mere bathos, which does nothing except legitimately provoke the comment, "Well, what of it?" . . . No inhibitions either within or without restrain them, but they are asking themselves, 'What is it worth?', and they are certainly no longer feeling that it is obviously and in itself something which makes life worth the living. . . . To Huxley and Hemingway—I take them as the most conspicuous exemplars of a whole school—love is at times only a sort of obscene joke. . . . But the joke is one which turns quickly bitter upon the tongue. . . . Absorbed in the pursuit of sexual satisfaction they never find love and they are scarcely aware that they are seeking it, but they are far from content with themselves. In a generally devaluated world they are

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eagerly endeavouring to get what they can in the pursuit of satisfactions which are sufficiently instinctive to retain inevitably a modicum of animal pleasure, but they cannot transmute that simple animal pleasure into anything else. They themselves not infrequently share the contempt with which their creator regards them, and nothing could be less seductive, because nothing could be less glamorous, than the description of the debaucheries born of nothing except a sense of the emptiness of life.<sup>1</sup> Such a statement as this indicates that when the sexual life is divorced from all moral and spiritual considerations and degenerates into sheer animalism, it brings a fearful nemesis in its train. How vastly different is the testimony of those who have adopted the teaching of Jesus on this matter! Even those who reject the Christian view of sexual relations are surely opposed to prostitution, involving as it does the utter degradation of womanhood and shameful conduct on the part of men who simply regard the women concerned as means to the gratification of their sensual desires. It is, of course, clear that the illicit relations associated with 'free love' avoid the worst features of prostitution, and are on that account often described as harmless and ethically unobjectionable. It may not be easy to 'prove' that such relations are wrong, just as it is not easy to 'prove' that a man ought to be unselfish. Moral judgments are intuitively reached. What is quite certain, however, is that extra-matrimonial intercourse is condemned by the religious consciousness as a fatal barrier to harmonious fellowship with God. Those who do not take a religious view of life but regard human beings as intelligent animals are not likely to pay heed to such a plea, but even they would do well to consider whether or not 'free love' enhances either their own self-respect or their respect for those who are so very accommodating.

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Krutch, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 97 ff.

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### (c) SINS OF THE SPIRIT

Whatever the virtues associated with Pharisaism, and they were by no means inconsiderable, as St. Paul's obvious pride that he was a Pharisee sprung from Pharisees clearly indicates, yet in the Gospels we hear more about the *sins* of the Pharisees, and those sins were, in the main, sins of the spirit. Jewish scholars frequently maintain that the remarks of Jesus about the Pharisees were hardly fair. That there were genuinely good Pharisees is no doubt true. What Jesus attacked was average Pharisaism and the fundamental tendencies of the Pharisaic movement, so that His remarks do not apply equally to all Pharisees. What most offended Him was the self-satisfied cocksureness of so many of the Pharisees, who were confident that they had nothing more to learn; the imperturbable, cool arrogance with which they assumed their vast superiority to their contemporaries; their blindness to their own faults and their vulture-eyes for the weaknesses of others. They were self-sufficient, self-complacent, delighted with their own achievements in the way of piety and virtue; self-important; lovers of the lime-light, who regarded the deference shown to them in the streets and in the synagogues as their natural due; and, in consequence of all these characteristics they were harsh in their judgments and apt to look down on ordinary people with superior scorn. Such sins of the spirit as self-sufficiency, self-complacency and self-importance, are commonly regarded as harmless eccentricities, but Jesus took a far graver view of them, as manifestations of that inordinate self-love which is the root of all evil. The reason why Jesus took those sins so seriously was that they made people incapable of growth, unteachable, impenetrable, unsusceptible, self-satisfied and (worst of all) uncharitable.

It is one of the worst of the sins of the spirit to be simultaneously intensely critical of others and without the least power of self-criticism; to see the mote in a brother's eye and to be unaware of

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the beam in one's own. A man who can thank God because of his superiority to other men (Luke xviii. 11 f.) is really a lost soul, more utterly lost than any *roué*. People who profess to sympathise with the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son surely miss the point altogether. There is no suggestion that the elder brother had not been a far better son than the Prodigal, but he was very pleased with his own filial loyalty and was heartless and merciless in his attitude to his errant brother, and it was such things as smug self-satisfaction and utter pitilessness that Jesus regarded as the worst possible faults. It is this Pharisaic background that enables us to understand why Jesus so exalted the child-like spirit and declared that unless men received the Kingdom of God as a little child they could not enter into it at all. A child is teachable, receptive, open-minded, ready to listen and to pay heed, and is thus the very opposite of the average Pharisee. While Jesus could make no headway with Pharisees, He succeeded with men of childlike hearts. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou dost hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them to babes.' As Wellhausen remarks: 'Thus religion ceases to be the domain of experts. It requires no cleverness, no cunning rabbinical learning, but a simple, open mind. The poor in spirit, the children in soul, understand it better than the clever and the wise, who make a profession of it. Thus the protest of Jesus against the arrogance of the Scribes and Pharisees becomes a protest against their conceit about their scholarship, by which they exalted themselves above the common people and separated themselves from them. Jesus felt pity for the flock which was in such great need of guidance but was left in the lurch by the professional shepherds.'<sup>1</sup> There are 'intellectuals' to-day who suffer from defects similar to those of the Pharisees. They are confident of their superiority to other people, proud of their wisdom and sagacity, sure that nobody can teach them anything, and

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 384.

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as little inclined as was the Pharisee in the parable to cry: 'God be merciful to me, sinner that I am.' They attribute their ethical coolness and religious indifference to their enlightenment, and fail to recognise that the hard arrogance and pride of their spirits has rendered them impervious to spiritual truth. The idea of 'turning' and 'becoming like children' that they may enter the Kingdom of God appears in their eyes a simplicity to which they can never stoop. Be that as it may, the greatest of all sins, according to Jesus, is to be found in that Pharisaic arrogance and pride and conceit and self-complacency and self-sufficiency and self-importance which lock and bolt the heart against the Spirit of God, bar the way to all moral and spiritual advance, and so distort and corrupt the judgment that the very teaching of Jesus is dismissed as worthless or even pernicious.

Hardly less surprising than the serious view He took of self-complacency was Jesus' contempt for mere negative goodness, mere harmlessness. His quarrel with the Scribes and Pharisees was partly due to the fact that the main concern of their lives was simply to keep themselves free from sin—they were not in any way anxious to be creative of good. They saw the real service of God in such unfruitful self-sanctification rather than in the service of their fellow-men. There seems to have been in Jewish circles a certain tendency to be content with 'negative' ethics. The Decalogue, on its purely ethical side, deals solely with things that must not be done. John the Baptist's ethical teaching was largely negative—soldiers were to refrain from violence, and tax-gatherers from extortion. Even the Golden Rule always appears in a negative form in Jewish literature. 'The thing which you hate, do to nobody.'<sup>1</sup> Hillel's answer to a non-Jew's question as to the content of the Law ran: 'What is hateful to thee, do not do to thy fellow. This is the great foundation, all the rest is commentary.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tobit, 4, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Hirsch, *E.R.E.* Vol. VI, p. 683.

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It is often contended that this negative form of the Golden Rule is just as comprehensive as the positive form of it given by Jesus (Matt. vii. 12). Yet between the two forms there is all the difference between non-maleficence and active beneficence, between the highly respectable law-abiding citizen who is quite content with a quiet self-centred life and the public-spirited citizen keen on the service of society. Jesus took a rather grave view of 'harmless' people who were none the less guilty of serious sins of omission. Dives, in the parable, went to a place of torment, although no ill is recorded of him, except that a beggar lay at his gate full of sores and he did nothing about it. The servant who made no use of the talent entrusted to him, though he carefully preserved it and returned it to his master intact, was denounced as 'wicked and slothful', and consigned to the outer darkness, to weeping and gnashing of teeth. The priest and the Levite are tacitly censured for a serious sin of omission—they saw the wounded man lying in the road, and, passing by on the other side, hurried away. In the Parable of the Last Judgment, those who are pronounced accursed and dismissed to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, are condemned not because they had done some positive evil, but because they had failed to do positive good. The Rich Ruler, proud of his devotion to the Law from his youth upwards, is given to understand that the religious man who is concerned simply with his own character and the salvation of his own soul is a selfish, loveless creature and, therefore, sadly deficient in the sight of God. 'If your disposition towards your fellow-creatures be purely negative, if you are not actuated by an ardent, by an enthusiastic love and benevolence towards all mankind, you are morally good for nothing, tasteless salt not good even for the dunghill.' He thus raises the standard of morality to the highest possible point.<sup>1</sup> Mere self-culture, even on the best ethical and religious lines, is not enough and ends in defeat. The only goodness worthy of the

<sup>1</sup> Seeley, *Ecce Homo*, p. 256.

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name is an active and creative goodness that by service makes a definite and positive contribution to the welfare of humankind. Service is inseparable from the Christian ethical ideal. Religion has all too often degenerated into a mere prudence that extends its calculations beyond the grave or into mere trust in Divine Providence which has put men to sleep instead of making them crusaders for the good of mankind. Karl Marx would never have been able to denounce religion as 'the opiate of the people', if Christians generally had been true to the witness of their Master that mere negative ethics, mere harmlessness, is not enough. Nobody can reasonably regard the religion of John Howard or of William Wilberforce or of the Earl of Shaftesbury or of Florence Nightingale or of the early Quakers as an 'opiate', for it was obviously a dynamic, a force making for human uplift and the regeneration of the world. As Herrmann says: 'A man can acquire inner composure only when he gives his life to a cause which he serves, and is therefore a man who really works. Hence only the burden-bearers of mankind, that is, those who work for others, can attain to religion.'<sup>1</sup> At any rate, Jesus acknowledges no religion as genuine and no ethic as sound which does not inspire men to active service of their fellows. Contentment with a merely negative ethic He regards as one of the most fatal sins of the spirit.

The other sins of the spirit expressly mentioned by Jesus are referred to in the well-known passage about the things that 'defile' a man, that is, disqualify him for fellowship with God, separate him from God (Mark vii. 21-23). From the Jewish point of view the teaching of Jesus was never more revolutionary than when He rejected the idea that certain foods were unclean, and that by eating them men 'defiled' themselves. It was laid down in the Law: 'Whatsoever parteth the hoof and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall you eat' (Lev. xi. 3; cf. Deut. xiv. 6). All other animal foods were forbidden as 'defiling'. Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Dogmatik*, p. 15.



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insisted that no kind of food 'defiles', and He thus overthrew not merely the tradition of the Elders but also a large part of the ritual law of the Old Testament. Even Rabbis who recognised that no food defiles nevertheless insisted on the observance of the ritual and dietary laws. 'A corpse does not defile, and water does not make clean, but it is a decree of the King of all Kings; God has said, A statute have I laid down, a decree have I issued; no man is entitled to transgress my decree, for it says, "This is the statute of the Law, which Jahveh has commanded."' <sup>1</sup> One of the outstanding differences between Jesus and the Rabbis was that while they laid equal stress on the whole Law, ceremonial, national, ritual and ethical, He laid the main stress on the ethical. This aspect of the teaching of Jesus, Klausner apparently resents: 'So he decries the value of the ceremonial laws as to make them of secondary importance compared to the moral laws, and almost to nullify them.'<sup>2</sup> Jesus certainly did not completely nullify the ritual laws. He told the leper He had cleansed to go and show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifice commanded by Moses (Mark i. 44 and parallels). True, He did not enjoin fasting, but what He opposed, was not fasting itself, but only the parade of it. He wore the sacred tassels (*κράσπεδα*) which were one of 'the signs of piety' among the Jews. He went up to Jerusalem for the Passover on more occasions than one. When He scornfully decried the attachment of more importance to the tithing of mint and anise and cummin than to the weightier—ethical—requirements of the Law, He added 'These ought you to have done and not to have left the other undone' (Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xi. 42). In the light of such facts as these, His rejection of the dietary laws is all the more remarkable. He abrogated the distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean' food, and thus made all food 'clean'. The things that *really* separate men from God, He summarised thus: 'Evil machinations,

<sup>1</sup> R. Jochanan b. Zakkai (died about A.D. 80), quoted by S.B. Vol. I, p. 719.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* pp. 370 f.

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sexual vice, stealing, murder, adultery, insatiableness, malice, deceit, shamelessness, jealousy, abusive speech, arrogance, moral perversity.' This list includes sins of the flesh as well as sins of the spirit, and it is with the latter only that we are concerned just now.

'Evil machinations' (οἱ διαλογισμοὶ οἱ κακοί E.T. 'evil thoughts') are apparently mental processes by which deliberate and calculated evil is planned, after careful debate as to the prospective pleasures and pains and as to the means of execution. A good example from the Old Testament is the behaviour of David when he wished to secure Bathsheba as his wife. The husband must somehow be got rid of, but without incurring David in the odium of murdering him. So after careful consideration as to how this could be accomplished, he hit upon the device of sending word to Joab to put Uriah 'in the forefront of the hottest battle . . . that he may be smitten and die'—to all appearances as an ordinary war-casualty! The history of our own times supplies a terrible example—all the careful scheming and planning and plotting and contriving which went on for years in the minds of the Nazis, that, when the right hour struck, they might swiftly stand triumphant over a prostrate world. So generally, whenever a man—without any moral scruples—excogitates ways and means of securing advantage for himself, his mind has become the prey of 'evil machinations'.

'Insatiableness' (πλεονεξία, πλέον, ἔχω E.T. 'covetings'), in the Gospels, invariably denotes an overvaluation of material possessions and a constant itch to increase them, to 'have more'. 'Take heed and be on your guard against all covetousness' (Luke xii. 15). The Rich Man in the Parable was a materialist, whose material possessions were his dearest treasure in the world, on which he relied solely for his interest in life and his personal happiness. A materially minded man whose chief ambition it is to increase his spending power and thus to secure the services and comforts and luxuries and pleasures which only money can buy, by his very

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materialism cuts himself off from fellowship with God. 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' Apart from the religious results of 'insatiableness', the ethical results are no less serious. No man can rise to his full ethical stature so long as insatiable greed for material possessions is his chief characteristic, and, worse still, such greed easily leads to dishonesty and cruelty in every shape and form. ('O Lord, the sin, done for the things there's money in.') From such a fate a man is saved when his tastes are simple and when he values spiritual goods more than material things.

'Malicious acts' (*πονηρίαι*, A.V. 'Wickedness'; R.V. 'Wickednesses') bespeak hatred at work in the heart. No man can be on good terms with God if, through his own fault, he is on bad terms with his fellows. The man who says that he loves God and yet hates a fellow-creature is a liar (1 John iv. 20).

'Deceit' (*δόλος*, which means primarily 'bait' or 'snare') is, of course, the trickery of the crafty man who seeks to over-reach his fellows. The clever craft by which Jacob deprived Esau of his father's blessing is a good ancient example. The 'Pearl Harbour' incident of December 1941 is evidence that Orientals still excel in this sin of the spirit.

'Jealousy' (*ᾠφθαλμὸς πονηρός*, a Semitic term, E.T. 'an evil eye'), has been condemned as a hideous vice all through the ages. The meaning of the term is well brought out by the last words of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. When the representative of the disgruntled workers complained that those who had worked only one hour had received the same wage as those who had worked all day, the owner pointed out that if he wished to pay workers more than they had earned, he had a perfect right to do so, and then he asked: 'Art thou jealous because I am generous?' (E.T., 'Is thine eye evil, because I am good?'). Of all the sins of the spirit, this is perhaps the most repulsive, and probably the average man is never more utterly ashamed of himself than when he is aware of the coilings of envy and jealousy in his own heart.

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It is a perfectly natural passion, as the behaviour of dogs and infants clearly reveals. Jealous feeling rises unbidden, but it can be resisted and suppressed and not allowed to influence conduct. As Luther used to say, we can't prevent a bird from alighting on our heads, but we can prevent it from nesting in our hair. Jealousy is probably a more fertile source of human misery than any other sin of the spirit. It was the sin of Cain, that drove him to murder Abel. It is described by Dante as the 'Harlot . . . common vice and pest of courts'.<sup>1</sup> It was the 'green-eyed monster' responsible for the tragedy of Othello. The ethical repulsiveness of the vice is well brought out by Spenser:

*And next to him (Avarice) malicious Envy rode  
Upon a ravenous wolf, and still did chaw  
Between his cankred teeth a venomous tode,  
That all the poison ran about his chaw;  
But inwardly he chawéd his owne maw  
At neighbour's welth, that made him ever sad;  
For death it was, when any good he saw,  
And wept, that cause of weeping none he had;  
But when he heard of harm, he waxéd wondrous glad.<sup>2</sup>*

It has even been described as 'the vice of the world', that brings with it 'the atmosphere of hell',<sup>3</sup> and it is certainly one of the causes of the two great wars of this century. German 'Neid' is a very active passion, and what Caesar said to Cassius,

*Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,*

applies to the leaders of Germany. The jealous man resents the good fortune of others, and secretly—sometimes openly—gloats

<sup>1</sup> *Hell*, Canto xiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Faerie Queene*, Book I, Canto iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ruskin, Wild Olive*.

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when misfortune overtakes them. (Compare German 'Schadenfreude', a word which has no English equivalent.) Jealousy is the antithesis of love. It breeds sullen malicious hatred, and, therefore, disqualifies a man for approach to God, and from the ethical point of view, is degrading.

'Abusive speech' (*βλασφημία* A.V. 'blasphemy'; R.V. 'railing'). In classical Greek the word refers to slanderous, defamatory, calumnious or abusive speech—as opposed to words of praise. Though in biblical Greek the word usually has reference (like 'blasphemy' to-day) to impious speech about God, yet here, and often in St. Paul, the reference is to scurrilous, insulting speech about man. The simplest illustration of the meaning of the word is to be found in the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, when He speaks of people who allow their sullen anger so to master them that they fling words of utterly unwarranted abuse at others (Matt. v. 22). This tendency to traduce the character of others, accompanied often by a keen delight in so doing, is a painfully conspicuous feature of ordinary life.

'Arrogance' (*ὑπερηφανία*, *ὑπέρ*, *φαίνομαι*, and so literally 'appearing more than one is', E.T. 'pride'). This was, as we have already seen, one of the great faults of the average Pharisee who, in proud self-righteousness, looked down on others with arrogant disdain. The self-same characteristic appears in the snob and the prig of to-day, and in all conceited people who have an exaggerated sense of their own powers and importance. Such an attitude of mind disturbs a man's relations with God and vitiates all his dealings with his fellows. It is a subtle form of self-deception, and implies that a man's whole conduct of life is based on a lie. Until his false pride is broken and the phantasy dispelled, he can neither walk humbly with God nor practise justice and mercy in his behaviour towards men.

'Moral perversity' (*ἀφροσύνη*, E.T. 'folly'). When this word is rendered, as in the English translation, 'folly', it is something of

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an anti-climax. The 'fool', in the Old Testament sense of the term, however, is not an intellectual fool, but a moral and religious fool, that is, one who refuses to base his conduct on sound moral and religious principles. The reference is, therefore, to moral obtuseness, the contemptuous refusal to acknowledge any moral obligations or any moral distinctions; to that deliberate perversion of the will by which good is declared evil and evil good. A man whose moral instincts are thus perverted is beyond hope, guilty of that 'blaspheming against the Holy Spirit' which Jesus elsewhere describes as an unforgivable sin.

Once more, therefore, it is made abundantly clear that our Lord's conception of religion was through and through ethical. All the sins here referred to as separating a man from God are anti-social sins, sins against men, sins arising from inordinate self-love. As Holtzmann points out: 'The God, whom the worshipping man wishes to approach, treats him not according to the standard of his behaviour towards God (for there is no such thing), but according to the standard which the man is accustomed to adopt in his behaviour towards his fellows'<sup>1</sup> (cf. the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Matt. xviii. 23-35). It is no less clear that in His teaching about sin, Jesus is not tilting at windmills or doling out theological subtleties which leave the average man in doubt as to whether sin is a reality at all. He goes right to the facts, lays bare the human heart, and compels men to recognise the evil possibilities inherent in their own nature. He does not propound any theory as to the origin of evil, such as the doctrine of 'original sin', nor does He make any contribution to the philosophy of it. He assuredly does not think of men as totally depraved, for His appeals to men imply that there is good in them as well as evil. He takes men as He finds them, recognising, and forcing them to recognise, that they are involved in evil, and that deliverance from this evil is one of the prime necessities of their being. No man who

<sup>1</sup> *N.T. Theologie*, Vol. I, p. 227.

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is wide awake can lightly dismiss the evil propensities to which Jesus here refers. The tragic state of the world to-day is to be attributed to the activity of those evil forces, latent in the human heart, which are here catalogued. Evil machinations, sexual vice, wholesale robbery, murderous hatred, adultery, grasping greed, malice, trickery, shamelessness, jealousy, abusive language, utter moral perversity, have seldom, if ever before in the history of 'civilisation', run such riot on the world's stage as during the last few years. That these sins issue in human suffering and sorrow we know full well. That they widen the breach between man and God—the breach from which they sprang—the general drift from religion proves.

### (d) THE SINS ARISING FROM FALSE RELIGION

As has frequently been pointed out, Religion is not always a good thing, it is often a very bad thing. This remark applies not only to the magic and superstition and cruelty so frequently associated with the lower types of religion, but also to debased forms of the higher religions—including Christianity itself, for no one can, for instance, study Voltaire's attack on the Christianity of the French Roman Catholic clergy of his day—his 'Ecrasez l'infame'—without realising that truth and justice and moral passion were more on the side of the plaintiff than of the defendants.<sup>1</sup> As Hensley Henson has remarked: 'Here (in Religion) he (man) rises to his best, and here he falls to his worst.'<sup>2</sup> So there is good religion and there is bad religion, which externally resemble each other as do wheat and tares. Jesus found amongst His contemporaries a great deal of bad religion and exposed it without mercy. He saw calculating ambition and love of wealth and power masquerading under a cloak of piety, like a wolf in sheep's clothing.

<sup>1</sup> See Morley's *Voltaire*, Ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* p. 9.

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He observed that the leading representatives of religion, in the very name of the God of mercy Whom they professed to adore, were loveless and pitiless in their treatment of the sinful and the suffering, harsh in their judgments, and unwilling to forgive. He noted that a great deal of the piety around Him was a hollow sham. 'It is beyond doubt that His moral sense was chafed by many things, and in particular by Pharisaism, and that a material part of His teaching was formulated in antagonism to the Rabbis. We too must feel this antagonism, if ever we are to understand Him.'<sup>1</sup> That His attack on hypocrisy was as necessary as it was justifiable can be proved from the Talmud itself, which contains many warnings against hypocrites; for example, 'One must publicly expose hypocrites, because of the desecration of the divine Name'; 'Every man in whom hypocrisy dwells brings wrath into the world'; 'Even unborn children in their mothers' womb execrate hypocrites.'<sup>2</sup> So evidently hypocrites were a fairly numerous tribe.

### (i) *Inhumanity.*

This sham religion often gave rise to inhumanity. It was in the name of religion that the Scribes and Pharisees censured our Lord's acts of healing on the Sabbath. They claimed that such activity was a breach of Sabbath law. 'The Law contained a general command to rest on the Sabbath; the Pharisees developed this command into a prohibition of the most ordinary, necessary, and even beneficent occupations of life.'<sup>3</sup> What further incensed Jesus was the fact that though they themselves would not have hesitated to go to the assistance of an animal in distress on the Sabbath day, they denied His right to minister on the Sabbath to human beings in distress. Their religion had made them inhumane,

<sup>1</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. I, p. 544.

<sup>2</sup> See S.B. Vol. I, pp. 388 f.

<sup>3</sup> Hastings Rashdall: *Conscience and Christ*, p. 86.



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and the very inhumanity which it had inspired stamped it, in His eyes, as false. He insisted that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, so that man was the lord of the Sabbath and the Sabbath was not the lord of man (Mark ii. 27 f.). In other words, the Sabbath Law was designed for man's benefit, it was to be a boon not a burden, and therefore he was free from it whenever its observance conflicted with his welfare. Here we see what has been called 'the birth-struggle of an entirely new religious conception', destined to do away altogether with the Law *as Law*. Similarly when the Pharisees accused the disciples of reaping and threshing on the Sabbath because they gathered a few ears of corn as they walked through the fields, Jesus reminded them that mercy was a far more important thing than the observance of the letter of the Law (Matt. xii. 7). Again, the Bezan Codex adds to Luke vi. 4 these words: 'On the same day, seeing a man working on the Sabbath he said to him, Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, cursed art thou and a transgressor of the Law.' The Pharisees would have condemned the man concerned without a moment's hesitation; the fact of his working on the Sabbath would have been regarded by them as proof of his transgression. But Jesus held that if he was working with a clear conscience he was free from any blame. The rigid Sabbatarianism which has so often turned even the Christian Sunday into a day of tyranny and gloom finds abundant support in the attitude of the Pharisees, but none at all in that of Jesus. He took a human and humane view of the Sabbath. The Scribes and Pharisees sought to fasten Sabbath law on men as so many chains and fetters.

The same inhumanity appears in their condemnation of our Lord's friendly association with tax-collectors and sinners. From their point of view such contacts rendered Him 'unclean'. But Jesus exalted mercy far above and beyond mere ceremonial purity. In the same inhuman way they allowed a son to evade the filial

duty of supporting his indigent parents by the device of pronouncing 'dedicated' the money that could have otherwise been given for their relief. As soon as the fatal word 'Corban' was pronounced in reference to a sum of money, every penny was regarded as consecrated to God and, therefore, not available for parental use. That a son should wish to behave in that fashion was bad enough, but that he should do so with the connivance and active support of the exponents of the sacred Law was a perfectly monstrous thing to the mind of Jesus, and, indeed, an annulment of the Fifth Commandment. There is probably a hint in the Parable of the Kind Samaritan of the extent to which regard for ceremonial law interfered with ordinary humaneness, for we are probably to infer that the priest and the Levite left the wounded man untended because they were afraid that he was dead so that contact with his corpse would have defiled them.

The inhumanity of the Scribes and Pharisees surely reached its climax when they ascribed the healing ministry of Jesus to Beelzebub. To see goodness and call it badness, to witness beneficent activity on behalf of suffering humanity and to dismiss it as Satanic, bespeaks an attitude of mind so utterly perverse as to be unpardonable. This was no sin of ignorance or inadvertence which, according to Jewish Law, could be atoned for by sacrifice, it was wanton, deliberate, high-handed sin for which no sacrifice could atone. Jesus probably had this distinction in mind when, in an undogmatic, popular way, He described such wilful suppression of the plain witness of indubitable facts as well as of God's witness in the heart, as an 'eternal sin', never to be forgiven (Mark iii. 29), or, as we often say to-day, 'utterly unpardonable'. To call Jesus Beelzebub 'is in truth the ultimate blasphemy, far beyond any profane taking of God's name in vain, beyond intellectual atheism; for it is a flat denial of all spiritual values whatsoever. In the last resort, it makes truth a delusion, conscience a disease, and reduces man's life to a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

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signifying nothing. It is the worst and most deadly of all sins because it is the rejection of God's purposes and the denial of His nature; it is the betrayal of the cause of humanity—and it is spiritual suicide.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Jesus saw in lack of compassion for suffering and sinful humanity on the part of the religious leaders of His day a sure sign of a false religion. Like the prophet Micah, He recognised as genuine no religion which failed to inspire a man to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. It is surely one of the tragedies of Christian history, that, in spite of the clear witness of Jesus in the Gospels, so much cruelty has been perpetrated in His name. One thinks of the savage treatment meted out to supposed 'witches' by Christian men who imagined that they thereby served the Christian cause; of the bloody persecutions, accompanied with every refinement of torture, that have stained the annals of the Roman Catholic Church, which has shed more innocent blood than any other institution; and of the harsh sentences pronounced by the Star Chamber, at the instigation of Archbishop Laud, on many of the early Puritans. Even if ecclesiastics were honestly convinced that those whom they persecuted were in grievous error, one would have supposed that, with the teaching and example of Christ before them, they could never have resorted to the lopping off of ears, the branding of cheeks; the rack, the thumbscrew and the stake. 'Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted' (Gal. vi. 1). In such an utterance we hear the authentic voice of the Christian religion, an echo of the teaching of the Master. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' A religion which does not make men more humane is a bogus religion.

<sup>1</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 170 (footnote).

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### *(ii) Parade.*

Just as Jesus shrank from inhumanity as flesh shrinks from fire, so He shrank from all parade of piety and virtue. The ostentatious almsgiving, praying, and fasting which He so often witnessed, and which aimed at winning credit and applause from men, impressed Him as an utter travesty of true Religion (Matt. vi). It was a Jewish practice to wear on the forehead and the left arm little leather cases containing strips of parchment inscribed with words of the Law. These were known as phylacteries, and were probably regarded as charms against evil spirits as well as one of the signs of piety. The Scribes and Pharisees wore specially large ones. Similarly the pious Jew wore tassels of blue or white wool at the four corners of his outer garment, another of the signs of piety, and the Scribes and Pharisees wore extra big specimens (Matt. xxiii. 5). They occupied the best seats at banquets and the seats facing the congregation in the synagogues; they enjoyed being greeted in the market-place and being addressed as Rabbi. In all this outward parade of religion, Jesus saw a flat contradiction of the true religious spirit. The remarks addressed to the Church at Laodicea could have fittingly been addressed to many of them: 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and I am well off and I am in need of nothing, yet thou knowest not that thou art miserable and pitiful and poor and blind and naked' (Rev. iii. 17).

Jesus found all this parade of religion positively nauseating. He urged people, when they gave alms, to give so secretly that their left hand did not know what their right hand was doing; when they prayed, to repair to the privacy of their own sanctum; when they fasted, to behave outwardly as if they were not fasting at all. He insisted that genuine virtue is unconscious of itself (Matt. xxv. 39 ff.). Certain it is that when people fall in love with their own goodness, that goodness is spurious. The virtues on which men pride themselves are usually non-existent. Speaking of his unregenerate days, Bunyan says, 'I thought I pleased God as well as

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any man in England.' To make a self-conscious parade of piety and virtue, to be pleased with oneself and to delight in flattery and applause, is not only a sign of a weak nature but also a proof of a radically unethical religion.

### *(iii) Oppression.*

Jesus hated all oppression, but especially oppression in the name of Religion. The real significance of the Cleansing of the Temple lies partly in the fact that Jesus was protesting against the way in which the high-priestly families made religion a source of hardship to the many in the interests of the self-aggrandisement of the few. It was unlawful to offer for sacrifice any animal that was not perfect, and to make certain that the animal to be sacrificed fulfilled this condition, it was—very conveniently to the Temple authorities—deemed advisable to purchase one which the priests had examined and guaranteed. It was also unlawful to offer any money to the Temple except the sacred Jewish coinage, and so ordinary money in secular use (Roman, Greek or Jewish), was changed by representatives of the priests into the sacred coinage—for a suitable commission. The profits of this business were large and were the foundation of the great wealth of the highpriestly families. Hence Jesus declared that the House of Prayer was being turned into a cave where thieves sheltered. His action in this connection was the immediate cause of the Crucifixion. It was the utterly unethical character of the whole procedure which Jesus challenged and uncompromisingly condemned. Here He followed in the line of such prophets as Amos, who denounced the cheating tradesmen of his day. Dishonesty is bad in secular life in any circumstances, but when it is practised under the cloak of religion it is particularly offensive. To make a trade of religion, and a dishonest trade at that, was a thing so evil that Jesus did not hesitate to risk His life by publicly exposing it.

No less severe was His condemnation of the Scribes who—in

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some way, exactly how we are not told—made capital out of their position by plundering widows, and could even then, in pretence, that is, as if from some inner need, make long prayers (Mark xii. 40). Jesus dismissed as a hollow sham a religion which was in close alliance with oppression—and in this connection it is of interest to note that one of the chief causes of the hatred of the Greek Orthodox Church displayed by the Russian revolutionaries was the fact that it was tied hand and foot to the Czarist régime, one of the most oppressive ever known.

### *(iv) Moral Blindness.*

It is a familiar fact that Jesus brought against the Scribes and Pharisees the charge of 'hypocrisy'. But what did He mean by hypocrisy? (The verb *ὑποκρίνομαι* means primarily 'answer', 'reply', in which sense it is equivalent to *ἀποκρίνομαι*; from this primary meaning we get the idea of 'replying on the stage', that is 'acting', 'playing a part'; and from this again we get the meaning 'pretend', for example, 'they sent spies who pretended—*ὑποκρινόμενοι*—to be just men,' Luke xx. 20.) The etymology of the word does not enable us to get to the heart of its meaning in the New Testament. When Jesus calls the Scribes and Pharisees 'hypocrites', He does not mean that they were merely 'play-acting', 'pretending', that is, men inwardly aware of their badness but posing as good men. The trouble with them was that they sincerely thought that they were good men who were championing the cause of true religion, while all the time they failed to see that their goodness was largely counterfeit as well as lamentably deficient, and that what they regarded as the essentials of true religion were not its essentials at all. As Jesus pointed out they were 'blind guides' (Matt. xxiii. 24), for moral and spiritual blindness was their chief defect, though all the time they fondly supposed that nobody could see so clearly as they did. Thus Dean Inge's definition of a hypocrite as 'one whose outward demeanour is not

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an index of his inward state',<sup>1</sup> though it meets exactly what we mean by a hypocrite to-day, hardly fits the use of the word in the teaching of Jesus. The Pharisee was as self-righteous in his innermost thinking as in his outward demeanour, so that there was no contrast between his inner and his outer self. He honestly thought himself a model of piety and virtue. Doubtless there was a good deal of pretence amongst the Scribes and Pharisees, but their main fault was that they were *blind to their actual state*, so that a hypocrite in the Gospel sense of the term is rather 'one who is firmly convinced that he is pious and virtuous but is blind to his actual condition.' It is this aspect of hypocrisy which Anderson Scott stresses when he points out that it was 'a failure to think out the practical application of their religious principles in their relations with other men.'<sup>2</sup> They were so blinded by self-complacency, spiritual pride, and self-conceit that they could see no wrong in themselves, and were unable 'of themselves to decide what was right' (Luke xii. 57).

They saw the importance of tithes, but were morally blind to the fact that justice and mercy and fidelity were infinitely more important (Matt. xxiii. 23). They regarded it as a matter of vital moment that the dishes on their table should be ceremonially clean, but were blind to the fact that such ceremonial purity was no compensation for the extortion and excess by means of which the food placed on those dishes was purchased (Matt. xxiii. 25). They built the tombs of the prophets and decorated the monuments of the righteous, but were blind to the fact that they were animated by the same spirit as that which led their fathers to hound these self-same prophets and righteous men to their death (Matt. xxiii. 29 f.). As Jesus suggested, they had keen eyes for the gnat (גמול) but could not see the camel (גמל)! This blindness on plain moral issues was the direct product of a false view of reli-

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *New Testament Ethics*, p. 45.

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gion, a view which stressed the ritual more than the moral, the letter more than the spirit, tradition and custom more than the truth.

Hypocrisy, in the sense of moral blindness, is still to be found, more or less, in us all. We may not be hypocrites in the sense that we are 'acting a part', pretending to be good when we know that we are bad. We may not be hypocrites in the sense that we are guilty of self-deception in that we imagine that we are better than we really are. But we may still be hypocrites in this subtle sense—that we have a blind spot on some plain moral issue. The cause now-a-days is to be found, as a rule, not in self-complacency, and spiritual pride, as was the case with the Scribes and Pharisees, but in self-interest of one sort or another. So only can we understand why many devout Christian people supported slavery, or why a great and noble man like John Bright opposed Shaftesbury in his efforts to rescue children from long hours of labour in the mills, or why Sir John Bowring, the author of the hymn 'In the Cross of Christ I glory', as Governor of Hong Kong, helped to force the opium trade on China. Possibly there are few, if any, of us, who have not created a painful impression on somebody by a 'blind spot' on an ethical issue, and have not, in consequence, made our Christian profession appear hypocritical in his sight. The root of the trouble is that we are not entirely under the Rule of God, that we are merely on the confines of the Kingdom, not far from it, but not quite inside. Evil vanishes clean away only as the Rule of God *completely* takes the place of the rule of inordinate self-love.



### CHAPTER III

#### JESUS' VIEW OF GOOD

Just as all evil in human life is, according to Jesus, due to the rule of inordinate self-love, so all good is due to the replacement of egoism by the voluntary acceptance of the rule of God. All that He has to say about the good life is simply a description of the way men behave when the Kingdom of God is really established within them. One of the most important of His ethical principles is the recognition that

(a) CONDUCT IS DETERMINED BY CHARACTER  
AND NOT CHARACTER BY CONDUCT

It is still a common fallacy that the really important thing about a man is what he *does*—the implication being that conduct is always a safe and certain clue to character. This idea is sound enough so far as magistrates are concerned. They can take cognisance only of external conduct, and so long as a man's external conduct is correct he ranks with them as a good law-abiding citizen. Even if the police are thoroughly satisfied in their own minds that a man's character is thoroughly bad and that he is criminally inclined, they can obviously prefer no charge against him until those tendencies have found actual expression in an unlawful act; their primary concern is not with character but with conduct. Right and proper as that course is from the point of view of the civil authority—and any other course would obviously be tyrannical—yet it is totally inadequate from the point of view of ethics.

One of the facts of experience with which ethics has to deal is

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that right conduct and bad character may, on occasion at least, go together. The question at issue is so important for the understanding of the ethical teaching of Jesus that it will repay careful examination. It is clear that a man who behaves honestly is acting rightly. But it is just as clear that, if he does so simply and solely because he believes that honesty pays him in the long run, he is nothing more than an opportunist at heart—there is no high sense of honour within him, his conduct is right but his character is base. Such a man may all his life act honestly without ever acquiring honesty of soul. A clerk may be a model in the prompt and punctilious performance of his duties, but if his root motive is to outstrip his colleagues and to win favour and consequent promotion from his employers, his character is mean, for he is just a prudent, scheming, cunning, selfish fellow; and though he thus performs his duties in the most exemplary fashion year in and year out, he never acquires that noble quality of character which is designated 'conscientiousness'. That men should be polite, gallant, kind and considerate in their dealings with the other sex is generally recognised as right. But how often, alas! has it happened that a man has won a girl's complete confidence and love by treating her in that way, and has then seduced and abandoned her—the object he had in view from the very start! It is at this point that we see the weakness of Aristotle's idea—whatever the element of strength it contains—that 'Habituation' is the key to character, that men acquire virtue by performing virtuous acts. But honest acts do not necessarily make an honest man; the steady performance of duty does not necessarily produce a really dutiful and conscientious man; and acts of gallantry do not necessarily issue in a genuinely chivalrous man. Conduct is neither a certain clue to character nor the way to character. An illustration from the religious field makes the matter clearer still. Some years ago a wealthy mill-owner was a regular attendant at a church in the north of England. He was so pleased when he saw any of his employees at church that he

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encouraged them by giving them better jobs, with the obvious result that many of the workers saw in church-attendance the way to promotion. They behaved outwardly as the devoutest of the devout, but they never became really devout, for when the mill-owner died, their interest in religion vanished as the morning dew. The same type of problem occurs in connection with the so-called 'rice' Christians. There is a story told of a missionary who was very generous in the distribution of largesse and consequently had many converts. At last he had to announce that the distribution of rice and blankets would cease. His converts then gathered round him. 'No more rice?' they asked. 'No.' 'And no more blankets?' 'No.' 'Well then,' they exclaimed, 'no more hallelujahs!' The performance of religious acts had not made them truly religious. As Martin Luther said: 'Good pious acts never make a good pious man, but a good pious man produces good pious acts.'<sup>1</sup> It is clear, therefore, that right acts are no sure proof of good character. This fact is basic to all the teaching of Jesus about the good life.

It is sometimes objected that such an idea is flatly contradicted by our Lord's words: 'So then by their fruits you will know them.' Here surely Jesus teaches that character is known by conduct, that just as a fig tree is known as such by the fruit it bears, so what a man *is* is known by what he *does*! That is true, but Jesus is thinking of conduct *as a whole*, conduct so extended as to cover the whole man, with all his actions, words, motives and thoughts, conduct as the natural and inevitable expression of a man's very nature, like the fruit which a tree bears because it can bear no other. The whole point of the illustration which precedes this utterance of Jesus is that without a good tree there can be no really good fruit—and just as a good tree is essential to genuinely good fruit, so a good character is essential to genuinely good conduct. Genuinely right conduct is reached through good char-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Windisch, *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, p. 161.

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acter, good character is no more made by right conduct than figs can make a fig tree. 'Yes, as might be expected, goodness of character is the only condition that with even the slightest degree of probability tends to make for the doing of right acts. If a man is not morally good, it is only by the merest accident that he ever does what he ought.'<sup>1</sup> When outwardly right conduct does happen to appear in a man whose motives are mean or base, it would be dismissed, if all the facts were known, as rotten fruit. That right conduct of a sort can and does appear in men whose character leaves much to be desired, Jesus was well aware. He knew that there were people around Him whose outward conduct nobody could impeach, but whose hearts were corrupt. By their external 'good conduct' they may have deceived many into the belief that they were genuinely good men, good trees bearing good fruit, but they did not deceive Him: 'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you resemble white-washed sepulchres, which outside appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and every kind of uncleanness. Similarly you too on the outside appear to men to be righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness' (Matt. xxiii. 27-8).

One of the main criticisms which Jesus directed against many of His contemporaries was that they were satisfied with external obedience to the Law, but paid no heed to the evil at work in their hearts. So long as they were not guilty of anti-social conduct, they regarded it as a matter of indifference that suppressed hatred and ill-will were active within them. So long as they refrained from adultery and fornication, they deemed lascivious thinking and desiring a thing of no consequence. Hence the insistence of Jesus that the state of the heart was the paramount concern, that right conduct was in a state of unstable equilibrium so long as the desire to do evil was alive in the heart. 'The emphasis was set

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Ross, *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 310.

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irrevocably on being, not doing.<sup>1</sup> For Jesus, the main question confronting every man is not, What acts ought I to do? but, What manner of man ought I to be?

This emphasis naturally brought Him into collision with the religious leaders, for it implied that the sacred Jewish Law was inadequate. The Law laid down what acts a man ought to do, and Jesus maintained that a man might do all the acts laid down by the Law and still be in a very parlous state. Jewish legalists, on the other hand, like Aristotle, began with conduct and were confident that conduct determined character; by right acts, they claimed, men became righteous, as Aristotle held that it was the doing of just acts that made a man just. For them, therefore, all that was necessary, so far as man's ethical life was concerned, was a code of rules, and all the necessary rules had been divinely revealed in the Law, so that the good life consisted simply in obedience to the Law, in submission to a discipline imposed from without: Jesus held that the good life was the spontaneous activity of a transformed character. They regarded good conduct as one of a man's religious duties: Jesus regarded good conduct as the inevitable product of religion. Their concern was with outward acts: Jesus' concern was with the inner springs of conduct; He insisted that no external code could make men good, that what men needed was a right disposition, and that no mere code could ever effect a change of disposition. He found the root of the trouble in the sin of the soul, which He regarded as analogous to disease of the body. 'They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick' (Mark ii. 17). Just as pain and sickness and feverishness are not the disease itself, but symptoms of it, so the follies and misdemeanours of men are symptoms of the morbid condition of their souls. Jesus attacked not the symptoms (conduct), but the disease itself (the condition of the heart, the character). 'He always attacks the disease, not its symptoms. He re-

<sup>1</sup> M. Murry, *God*, p. 94.

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bukes acquisitiveness rather than wealth, lust rather than adultery, hatred rather than war or violence.<sup>1</sup> Hence His call for repentance (*μετάνοια*), no mere sorrow for wrong conduct, but a complete change of mind and attitude. To deal with conduct from the outside by means of a code of rules was merely to tinker with the human problem—no matter how excellent in itself the code might be. What man needed was a radical change of disposition, a heart right towards God, a heart placed under the governance of God. When the tree is good, the fruit is good; and when a man's disposition is good, that is, when a man with his whole heart wills what God wills, his conduct is good. Kant came very near to the central ethical emphasis of Jesus when he declared that it was not possible to conceive of anything anywhere in the world or even outside it which can, without any qualification, be regarded as good, except only a good will. According to the teaching of Jesus, a man has a good will only when he wants to do the will of God. In that complete surrender of the will of man to the will of God, that is, to the rule of God, the Kingdom of God, the secret of the Christian religion and Christian ethics lies.

*Our wills are ours, we know not how;*

*Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.*

From all this it is clear that St. Paul's idea that the 'code-method' was superseded by the 'Spirit-method' (that is, by the activity of the Spirit of God in the human heart), however independently he may have reached it, and however different his terminology and method of approach may be, is completely in line with the central emphasis of Christ. Both alike maintain that mere rules of right conduct leave the central ethical need of man untouched, but that if a man's disposition is put right by his free submission to the will of God and consequent communion with God, his conduct can be left to take care of itself—he will have an ever

<sup>1</sup> Dean Inge, op. cit. p. 45.

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clearer conception of the right and good, and a growing power to incorporate them in his own life. So we come to the second of the ethical principles of Jesus, namely,

### (b) A GOOD DISPOSITION

Jesus regarded the Will as the very citadel of personality. Unless and until a man wills what he ought, exalted thoughts and fine feelings signify very little. Only when of his own free will, he accepts the will of God as the supreme law of his own life can he find the secret of true religion, and therefore of sound ethical insight and real ethical achievement. Without that free surrender of the will, the resources of God are at no man's disposal. But when a man experiences God as 'a Power, not himself, making for righteousness,' and surrenders himself to that Power by willing what God wills, a change takes place in his very nature and disposition, a change so profound and far-reaching that it is comparable to a New Birth. He has opened his heart to the Kingdom of God, and has received the Kingdom of God as a little child. Henceforth he knows God not merely as the Author of his being, but as the Source and the Sustainer of the aspirations by which he is being made a new creature. The rule of self-will is abandoned for the voluntary acceptance of the rule of God. As his heart is set on doing the will of God, he can 'follow what his heart desires without transgressing what is right.' The moral law is no longer a dead letter, arbitrarily imposed upon him from without, but a living energy active within him.

Professor Fleure finds 'perhaps a main contribution of the humanist at the present juncture' in the 'replacement of external by internal controls.'<sup>1</sup> But that was precisely, beyond any doubt, the main contribution which Jesus made two thousand years ago to the ethical life of man. Just as He tracked sin to its secret lair in

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Ethics*, pp. 32 f.

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the heart, so He maintained that goodness is not a mere matter of conduct dictated by some external code, but an affair of the heart, the natural and inevitable expression of a good disposition, the fruit of a good tree. He *internalised* morality. Mere abstinence from evil acts He did not regard as a sign of goodness—for the motive of such abstinence might be fear of the consequences of evil; or selfish prudence, the careful calculation of self-interest; or pride, the desire for the esteem of men. Abstinence from evil was a sign of goodness only when it was the expression of abhorrence of evil as evil, and such abhorrence can be felt only where there is a good disposition. Jesus recognised that no matter how good the moral content of the Jewish Law was, yet that Law was external and attacked conduct from the outside. It was, therefore, impotent and largely valueless unless it could somehow be transformed into an inward law, able to control those impulses out of which come all the issues of life. The Law aimed at making men act rightly, but genuinely right acts can proceed only from the heart, and the thoughts and motions of the heart cannot be commanded. Thus the really good man does not merely conform himself to some external code, but is ruled from within, the moral law is written on his heart, and his disposition is such that he gladly and spontaneously obeys it. He knows the will of God and does it of his own accord, not because it is prescribed, but because he wants to do it, and recognises that in doing it he is true to his own highest nature. By identifying his will with the will of God, he has achieved true moral autonomy, and has thus replaced external by internal controls. Christianity is 'the religion which stands supreme above all others in its "inwardness", and takes the thought of regeneration of the self from its centre with unqualified seriousness.'<sup>1</sup>

The follower of the Way of Jesus thus acquires moral genius. Many a humble and unlettered disciple of Christ has gained a

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Taylor, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 224.



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moral insight and understanding which excels that of Plato or Aristotle or any other moral philosopher. 'Under the influence of the Christian pulpit, doctrines concerning the nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and *the duties of man*, which the noblest intellects of antiquity could barely grasp, have become the truisms of the village school, the proverbs of the cottage and the alley.'<sup>1</sup> In spite of all that men of science are saying to-day about the ethics which the course of evolution dictates, they can supply no new ethical insight to the Christian, for he already possesses a profounder moral insight than they. 'Philosophy hopes to cure the vices of human nature by working upon the head, and Christianity by educating the heart . . . philosophy undertakes to explain what is right to do, while Christianity undertakes to make men disposed to do it. . . . Philosophy, as such, works by reasoning, by enlightening the mind, by exposing miscalculations and revealing things as they are. Now by what process of this kind can the bad man be turned into the good? Where is the demonstration that will make the selfish man prefer another's interest to his own? Your dialectic may force him to acknowledge the right action, but where is the dialectic that shall force him to do it? Where is the logical dilemma that can make a knave honest? . . . To perform an act of kindness coldly, an act of self-denial reluctantly, an act of forgiveness with suppressed ill-will, or any right act whatever from interested motives, whether to escape punishment or to win applause, or mechanically from a habit of following fixed maxims, or from any other motive except the moral sense, is to break the fundamental law of the Christian Commonwealth. The Christian, therefore, must, it appears, cherish a peculiar temperament, such that every combination of circumstances involving moral considerations may instantly affect him in a peculiar way and excite peculiar feelings in him. He must not arrive at the right practical conclusion after a calculation or a struggle, but by

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, pp. 2-3. (Italics mine.)

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an instantaneous impulse. Rightly to appreciate what the circumstances are may indeed cost him thought and study, but when once the position is made clear to his mind, the moral sense should speak as promptly as the note sounds when the string of a musical instrument is struck.<sup>1</sup> That is a perfect description of the way in which the moral sense of the Christian at his best always works, and it is a profoundly significant thing. It is real moral genius. The ethical soundness of its pronouncements is admitted even by those who claim that they have now found a scientific basis for ethics, for all the ethical ideals to which, according to them, the course of evolution points, are simply the ideals that have been familiar to classical Christianity for two thousand years! If the moral judgment of the Christian is so sound, it is surely clear that the guidance responsible for it is valid; and he has been guided, not by a study of the course of the evolution of the past (Waddington) or by a consideration of the desirable course for evolution in the future (Huxley), but by his inner experience of God, by the Kingdom of God within him, and by the transformation of his nature and disposition, by the 'good heart' to which that experience has led.

A man is morally safe only when he has made the law of God the law of his own heart. So long as he is obeying an external law, be it the Jewish Law or some other code or even the code which evolution is said to suggest (and this is quite as *external* as the Decalogue), there is always the possibility that the impulses of his own heart will overpower him and drive him into disobedience. But when he loves righteousness and finds delight in it, the spell of evil is broken. The really truthful man deals truthfully not because the truth is required of him by some external code or authority, not because truth is an 'intellectual lubricant' which will aid the future course of evolution, but because he has 'truth in his inward parts', and seeks to be true as God is true. The really chaste

<sup>1</sup> Seeley, *op. cit.* pp. 110, 111, 113, 358.

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man is the man who subdues his passionate impulses, not against his own wishes, not because he desires to avoid shame or the wounding of his self-respect, not just because he can thereby aid the future evolution of society on desirable lines, but because he is in love with virtue and knows that unchastity is a sin against himself and against God. The truly kind man is one who does kind acts not because he feels that they are required of him by society or because he realises that they are to his advantage or because he is aware that cruelty is undesirable from the evolutionary point of view, but because he has a kindly nature that finds its highest felicity in beneficence, and because he delights to express the love of God. 'No heart is pure that is not passionate, no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic.' In other words, a man is morally safe only when he has a good disposition, bent on doing good.

Such seems to be the significance on its purely ethical side of the curious passage: 'Whenever the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, it wanders through waterless places seeking rest, yet does not find it. Then it says, I will return to my house, whence I came out. And when it has come it finds it empty, swept and in order. Then it goes and takes along with itself seven other spirits worse than itself, and they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first' (Matt. xii. 43-45). The point is that when the soul is merely swept and adorned with negative virtues (that is, cleansed from evil), but left vacant, it is in constant danger of being re-occupied by evil. 'In the moral world there is no ground without a master, and the waste lands belong to the Evil One.' An evil passion can be kept out of the mind only as a good passion is in possession of it. Only an inner enthusiasm for goodness can keep badness at bay. It is a well-known fact that Nature abhors a vacuum; the surrounding atmosphere is, so to speak, always seeking to recapture the lost ground, like a besieging army seeking ingress into a city. Evil cannot be effectively barred out, it has to be *crowded out by good*. There has come down to us

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in *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* the record of a conversation that took place in the Middle Ages between some Friars. They were discussing the various ways of dealing with temptation, and one of them spoke as follows: 'When I feel the turmoil of diabolical carnal suggestion, I forthwith run and shut the door of my heart, and for the safety of the fortress of my heart, I occupy myself in holy meditations and desires, so that when the carnal suggestion cometh and knocketh at the door of my heart, I answer it as if from within, "Begone, for this lodging is already taken, and here no folk may enter." Whereupon, seeing itself conquered, it departeth from me as one discomfited.' That is very quaint, but very sound. Mere cleansing is not safety. Devotion to good is the only sure shield against evil. Only inner enthusiasm for goodness can keep evil at bay.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish Law, on its ethical side, forbade the evil act, but failed to kindle enthusiasm for goodness, and enthusiasm for goodness is the outstanding feature of that good disposition which results when the Kingdom of God is established in the heart, and that good disposition is the central need of man.

### (c) THE NEW HUMANITY

Those who have this good disposition represent a new type of human being, constitute a New Humanity. The chief features of the good disposition are described in the Beatitudes, which set forth the kind of character, the tone and temper and quality of spirit which distinguish those who have the Kingdom of God within them. The importance of the Beatitudes can hardly be exaggerated. As Harnack says: 'Whenever what Jesus meant (by His preaching) threatens to become obscure to us, we must ever again meditate deeply on the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.'<sup>2</sup> The Greek word *μακάριοι* with which each Beatitude

<sup>1</sup> Cf. F. Paget, *The Perils of the Vacant Heart, The Spirit of Discipline*, pp. 131 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 47.

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begins is better rendered 'blessed', (like the Hebrew אֲשֶׁר in the Old Testament), than 'happy', though in classical Greek (cf. the Latin *beatus*) its primary reference is to those who are fortunate enough to have wealth and education and other earthly privileges, and are, therefore, 'happy'. There is an important difference between 'happiness' and 'blessedness'. The word happiness has not the definiteness or the sacredness of "truth" and "right"; it does not equally appeal to our higher nature, and has not sunk into the conscience of mankind. It is associated too much with the comforts and conveniences of life; too little with "the goods of the soul which we desire for their own sake." In a great trial, or danger or temptation, or in any great and heroic action, it is scarcely thought of.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand 'blessedness' describes not a pleasant state of feeling on the part of those to whom it is applied, but happiness from an ideal point of view. It refers to that true well-being which is often opposed to apparent well-being—for instance, Latimer might have pronounced his fellow-sufferer, Ridley, 'blessed' even when the flames began to crackle round him! Thus a Beatitude is something of a surprise, a paradox; it declares truly fortunate those who, from the ordinary point of view, and perhaps also in their own opinion, seem to be most unfortunate. It is commonly supposed that Jesus was in a tranquil and pacific mood when He uttered the Beatitudes, and that, perhaps, is why they so often sound in modern ears as harmless platitudes. As a matter of fact they came out of the prophetic soul of Jesus. They reveal His fighting spirit. Each of them is a challenge. They were spoken in an electric atmosphere. As Deissmann used to say, they are not quiet stars, but flashes of lightning followed by a thunder of surprise and amazement. They are not calm still ponds, but rushing roaring mountain torrents. They are surprises, flat contradictions of contemporary ideas. Though some of them

<sup>1</sup> Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. III, p. lix.

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are predominantly religious in their emphasis, yet all have ethical implications.

(1). *Blessed are the poor* (πτωχοί) . . . *for theirs is the Kingdom of God* (Matt. v. 3; compare Luke vi. 20). I have omitted (with St. Luke) the words 'in spirit', for it is impossible to get any meaning suitable to the context out of the phrase 'poor in spirit', and I have adopted Luke's 'Kingdom of God' for Matthew's 'Kingdom of Heaven'. The words 'in spirit' were doubtless added because the Beatitude seemed to make poverty alone the condition of entrance into the Kingdom of God—and that, of course, cannot be the meaning. Jesus is referring to the 'poor', just as He refers elsewhere to the 'rich', not the 'rich in spirit'. The word πτωχός (from πτώσσειν, 'cringe', 'cower') was commonly used amongst Greek-speaking Jews instead of the more honourable word for 'poor', namely, πένης, which denotes one who has to work for his living. Thus πτωχοί here is the equivalent of πένητες 'poor hard-working people'. The reference is not to squalid poverty, but to those whose financial resources are so slender that their position would soon be critical if they ceased work. Most of us are 'poor' in the sense in which the word is used here. Just as Jesus insisted that it was an exceedingly difficult thing for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, so here He points out that it was easy for the poor. It was not wealth as such that hindered men from entering the Kingdom, but its religious and ethical effects upon the character of the rich man. Similarly it was not comparative poverty as such that made it easy for men to enter the Kingdom, but the religious and ethical effects of poverty upon the poor man. Wealth is apt to lead men to put their whole trust in material things, to make them idle, vain, arrogant, self-indulgent, self-centred, unsympathetic, cruel, callous; and to people of that type the Kingdom of God is closed. The hard-working poor are more likely to find in their spiritual goods their most precious possessions, to spend themselves in the service of others, to be humble-

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mind, self-sacrificing, compassionate, kind, tender; and to people of that type entrance into the Kingdom is inevitably easy. (Even Aristotle, who takes a very aristocratic view of ethical questions, at one point at least approaches the teaching of this Beatitude. He concedes that it is not necessary to rule sea and land in order to practise virtue, and then admits that ordinary private citizens (*ιδιωται*) are not less but even more virtuous than men in high station.)<sup>1</sup>

Jesus here denies outright that wealth is a sign of divine acceptance and poverty of divine disfavour—and there are still rich people in the world who are apt to regard their worldly good fortune as due to some special dispensation of divine Providence and poor people who feel that somehow Providence has neglected them. These ideas were far more pronounced amongst the Jews in the time of Jesus. When He declared that it was easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, His disciples, assuming that wealth was a token of divine blessing, exclaimed in amazement: Who, then, can be saved? that is, If the rich are going to find salvation with difficulty, what chance at all have the poor? Jesus saw in wealth, not indeed a sin, but a grave peril to the moral and spiritual life. The rich so easily degenerate into oppressors, exploiters, mammon-worshippers, and become proud, arrogant, impious towards God, and cruel towards men. From that peril, the poor are free. He held that the simplicities of poverty brought men nearer to the truth of God and made them readier to do the will of God, than the illusions and snares of wealth. This Beatitude, therefore, was something of a bolt from the blue! In contrast to the common expectation that the high born, the wealthy, the privileged, the Priests and Scribes and Pharisees, as the obvious favourites of God, would have the first right of entrance into the Kingdom, He declared that that right belonged to poor folks toiling for their living, not

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Eth.* X, viii, 10.

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because they were poor, but because, being poor, they were more likely to appreciate the moral and spiritual values for which the Kingdom of God stood. 'It is only the poor and the humble who easily understand the Gospel; it is difficult for the rich and the religious leaders to do so because they do not feel the need. In their wisdom they cannot see the wood for the trees, and their hearts are attached to too many other things to be able to offer an unconditional surrender . . . Poverty and simplicity are the foundation of truth; but an artificial and polished age neither sees nor believes this fact.'<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God is open to all, but the poor are more likely to enter it than the rich.

Christian history confirms the message of the first Beatitude. Among the early converts there were not many highly educated people, not many socially influential people, and not many who were high-born (1 Cor. i. 26). Celsus sneered at the Church because it found room for wool-dressers, cobblers, and fullers. The Pilgrim Fathers were, in the main, working men. The greatest religious leaders, with but a few exceptions, have been men of humble origin. Just as heat rises from floor to ceiling, so Society is continually rejuvenated from below, and the great deliverers of mankind emerge from the lowest strata. The reason, doubtless, is that, as Sir Rabindranath Tagore says: 'Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, and thus living in a world of lesser reality. This may be good for one's pleasure and pride, but not for one's education. Wealth is a golden cage in which the children of the rich are bred into artificial deadening of their powers.'<sup>2</sup> Blessed are the poor!

(2). *Blessed are they who mourn* (οἱ πενθοῦντες), *for they will be comforted* (Matt. v. 4). (Compare Luke vi. 21: *Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.*) The two forms of this Beatitude

<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Vol. I, pp. 45 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Personality*, p. 121.



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are probably due to different translations of the Aramaic original. The English word 'mourn' rather suggest funerals, but the Greek verb was used in a much wider sense. The Lucan rendering, too, points to sorrow of a more general kind than merely mourning the dead. Nor is it necessary to follow either the patristic writers who interpret the saying as a reference to sorrow for sin, or Strack and Billerbeck, who claim that Jesus is referring to those who have recognised their insufficiency before God and, in view of the announcement of the near approach of the Kingdom of God, feel penitence about it. What Jesus has in mind is the blessedness of suffering and sorrow in general—so that the paradox is obvious. This Beatitude is a surprise, a novel doctrine—the truly fortunate are those who know what suffering is! Before Jesus, even the so-called wise men saw value only in joy. They counted themselves most fortunate if they escaped sorrow, and even refused passionate joy lest it should turn to sorrow. Of course, none of us wants sorrow, we should be very foolish if we did. None of us likes sorrow when it comes, we should be very unnatural if we did. The solid fact remains, however, that we can never rise to the highest moral and spiritual heights possible to us, or do the best work of which we are capable, without some experience of adversity. There is no doubt about its being our duty to seek to sweep away all the social and physical disabilities which press so hard on the lives of men and women, but if, in this enterprise, we achieved absolutely complete success, paradoxically enough it is almost certain that, human nature being the imperfect thing it is, we should lower the general moral status. A world without danger of any kind would be a world without heroism. If there were no wrongs, no suffering, no want, no sorrow, there would be no call for patience, self-denial, brotherly help, sympathy, pity or compassion. Just as a child who is never crossed, whose every whim is gratified, develops into that moral monstrosity known as a 'spoilt' child, so men and women seldom, if ever, achieve true nobility

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and strength of character, unless they are tempered in the fires of suffering of some sort. It seems to be a law of life that without pains there are no worth-while gains. But when a man is under the rule of God, he gains confidence that nothing he is called upon to suffer is utterly in vain, that while 'all chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.' As Robert Browning Hamilton says:

*I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
She chattered all the way,  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
And ne'er a word said she,  
But, oh, the things I learned from her  
When Sorrow walked with me!*

Blessed are they who know what trouble is!

(3). *Blessed are the gentle (οἱ πραεῖς), for they will inherit the earth.* (Compare Psalm xxxvii. 11.) The familiar rendering 'meek' should be avoided, for the word is now hopelessly debased, as the contemptuous phrase 'meek as Moses' indicates—though those who use it are apparently unmindful that Moses slew an Egyptian. An exact English equivalent of the word *πραεῖς* is difficult to find. Xenophon uses the word of 'tame fish' (*πραέων ἰχθύων*),<sup>1</sup> and he speaks of agriculture as a 'gentle art' (*πραεῖα τέχνη*).<sup>2</sup> In Aristotle the man who is *πρᾶος* is described as 'imperturbable and not led away by passion',<sup>3</sup> while *πραότης* is the mean between excessive anger and supine angerlessness.<sup>4</sup> In the New Testament the word seems always to indicate forbearance and consideration for others, willingness even to waive one's rights if thereby the general good

<sup>1</sup> *Anab.* I, iv, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Nic. Eth.* IV, v, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Oec.* xix, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* II, vii, 10.

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can be furthered; the quality concerned is the opposite of arrogance and violence. The 'gentle' man checks the instinctive desire to dominate others, the desire for power over others, which, when it becomes an overwhelming lust is a ghastly and hideous manifestation of the worst side of human nature.

It has been a common idea all through the ages that the way to dominion on the earth is the way of self-assertion and brutal violence. The Romans sought dominion with cold steel. Since their day it has often been supposed that 'blood and iron' are the only really powerful weapons in governing men. Most European nations—especially in their dealings with backward peoples—have at one time or another displayed the Aryan bird of prey's insatiable lust to lord it in every land. So this Beatitude again is a bolt out of the blue! It declares that the way to dominion is the way of gentleness and service. Not the violently self-assertive but the gentle will ultimately prevail. Not the tiger-men are the truly successful, but those who are considerate of the rights and needs of others. This idea is surely a startling paradox, but it is no Utopian dream. In spite of all the greed and self-seeking of the modern world, it is increasingly recognised that those are first in honour who free the slave, help the helpless, and deliver the oppressed; that enduring power over men is gained not by the pistol but by serving them. Speaking of the African natives Livingstone said: 'Goodness or unselfishness impresses their minds more than any kind of skill or power.'<sup>1</sup> And as Harnack pointed out: 'By our guns we can indeed between to-day and to-morrow conquer a land, and by our trading companies we can between to-day and to-morrow draw peoples into our nets; but the true conqueror is he who widens the fellowship of Christian brotherhood, and enables foreign peoples to make their own the best that he possesses. Alongside the powerful mission which our technical science and trade carry on all over the globe, must go the mission of the

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, *Life of Livingstone*, p. 346.

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knowledge of God, of Christian virtues and Christian civilisation.<sup>1</sup> Very little heed has hitherto been paid to such teaching as that, but men everywhere are beginning to recognise that it is right. It is dawning on the mind even of the most hard-boiled imperialist that colonies present an opportunity for service rather than for mere exploitation. And surely one meaning of the terrible events of the years through which we are passing is that the overwhelming majority of mankind repudiate a dominion based on bayonets and bombs, and acknowledge only the dominion of service. Blessed are the gentle, for dominion on earth belongs to them!

(4). *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be satisfied.* (Compare Luke vi. 21: Blessed are ye who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.) There is certainly no need, with C. H. Dodd, to suggest that *δικαιοσύνη* here means not 'righteousness' but 'the vindication of right, the triumph of the good cause,'<sup>2</sup> for such a meaning would be quite unsuitable in verse 20 of this same chapter, and it is reasonable to suppose that *δικαιοσύνη* means the same in both cases. In the latter case Jesus declares that a righteousness in excess of that of the Scribes and Pharisees is desirable, and in the former that some desire that righteousness. Bengel expresses the idea quite accurately when he refers the saying to those 'who feel that they have not got righteousness of themselves and vehemently desire it.'

The paradox is clearly seen when the passage is paraphrased thus: Blessed are they who are not at peace, who are bitterly dissatisfied with themselves, disturbed and distressed, shot through and through with a noble discontent; for God bestows His favours not on those who are self-sufficient and self-satisfied, but on those broken by a sense of need. Again and again, Jesus revealed His horror of the smug self-complacency that inevitably arrests all development, like some foul blight or curse. A man is in a healthy

<sup>1</sup> *Reden u. Aufsätze*, Vol. II, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Moffatt, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 12.

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moral condition only when his reach exceeds his grasp, when he yearns for higher nobler life. Just as awareness of one's ignorance (cf. Socrates) is the condition of gaining greater knowledge, so the awareness of one's imperfection is the condition of achieving nobler character. Blessed are they who feel that their most fitting prayer is 'God be merciful to me, sinner that I am!'

(5). *Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.* To understand the original significance of this saying one must glance at contemporary conditions. If there was one thing that the pious Jew in the time of our Lord desired more than anything else, it was to be acquitted when he stood before the judgment-seat of God, that is, to obtain mercy. He supposed that the best way of doing so was to win God's favour, to pile up merit with God by a series of devout acts—regular worship, daily prayers, weekly fasts, almsgiving, tithing, and obedience to the Law. The relationship between the pious man and God was conceived as one of contract, so much obedience and piety meant so much merit and reward, above all acquittal, mercy, at the Judgment. Yet one of the outstanding features of the pious Jews was their utter pitilessness in their dealings with their fellow-creatures. Their attitude to the woman guilty of adultery was characteristic—they would have been glad to see her stoned to death. They were very critical of others. They regarded it as a religious duty to show no mercy to any Jew who neglected the Law. 'It is forbidden to show mercy to any man who possesses no knowledge (of the Law)'. 'He who gives his bread to a man who observes not the Law will suffer for it.'<sup>1</sup> As Bousset says: 'When Jesus fought so frequently against the censoriousness of the pious, and in contrast to religious mercilessness emphasised nothing so strongly as the duty of mercy and forgiveness, he struck in that way the main defect of Jewish piety.'<sup>2</sup> This Beatitude is, therefore, one of the 'spear-points' of the

<sup>1</sup> S.B. Vol. I, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Religion des Judentums*, p. 189.

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teaching of Jesus. He says in effect: 'It is not by the punctilious observance of a religious routine that you will obtain favour with God, but by doing the very thing you most neglect, by showing mercy, mercy to indigent parents, to widows, to children, to the suffering, the sorrowful, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the prisoner, the erring, the outcast, and to those who have wronged you.' In modern terminology, one may say that the crucial test of a man's piety is not church attendance or the recitation of creeds or the saying of prayers but the part that mercy and compassion play in his life. There is a type of piety and righteousness that is positively repellent—the type that knows no mercy. I was once present at evening prayers in a sumptuous home and noted that the domestic staff were not allowed to sit on the drawing-room chairs but brought in with them a hard wooden backless form and sat on that! The horrors of merciless piety and virtue are well portrayed in such novels as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and such plays as 'The Barretts of Wimpole Street'. Again and again Jesus turns to the question of mercy: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive them that trespass against us.' 'For if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.' Even the act of giving a cup of cold water in mercy is not forgotten (Matt. x. 42).

This emphasis on mercy has exercised an extraordinary influence on the course of human affairs. It has been the inspiration of those who have sought to check the barbarity of war, who have founded hospitals and asylums and orphanages, who have instituted prison reform, championed the slave, cared for waifs and strays, espoused the cause of the backward races, and endeavoured to prevent cruelty to children and all unnecessary animal suffering. In the lives of individuals it has led multitudes to temper justice with mercy, to stifle vindictive passion and to shed cruel prejudices.

Mercy becomes sentimental only when it *ignores* justice. It cer-

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tainly becomes sentimental when it is directed to aggressors rather than to their victims. The Kind Samaritan attended first to the victim of the robbers' foul play, he did not make it his prime concern to seek out the robbers and shake hands with them! Mercy to aggressors that slurs over the cruelty and wrong which they have inflicted on others as things just to be forgiven and forgotten is a grotesque and immoral caricature of the genuine thing.

(6). *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* This Beatitude was originally a sharp protest against ceremonial religion. As we have already seen, the average pious Jew regarded purity as an external thing, secured by washings and bathings, by abstinence from certain foods, by avoidance of all contact with dead bodies or with Gentiles. Such ceremonial purity was supposed to qualify for fellowship with God. This applied particularly to the High Priest who, on the Day of Atonement, when he had to offer sacrifice in the Holy of Holies, bathed five times and washed his hands and feet ten times in order to secure and safeguard the 'purity' necessary for the discharge of his duties. So in this saying of Jesus we have primarily a polemic against ideas commonly cherished by those around Him. He says in effect: 'Fellowship with God is not the special prerogative of the priestly class or of those who carefully observe ceremonial law, but the common privilege of all who are pure; and purity is not external but internal, a quality not of the body but of the heart (that is, of the mind).' As Bengel, with his sure exegetical instinct, remarks, *Non sufficit puritas ceremonialis.*

Purity of heart is something far more than chastity, true as it is, as Augustine says, that 'A lustful heart is that far-off land, a land of darkness from Thy face . . . by an unfailing ordinance Thou sendest penal blindness on lawless passion.'<sup>1</sup> It is more than freedom from materialism, though, of course, the man who is pure in heart is not tainted with the disease of Mammonism. It is more

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, I, xviii.

than single-mindedness, the love of goodness for its own sake, and not for the sake of happiness or any other secular end. The key to the understanding of the phrase is the passage in Mark vii. 21 f. discussed in the previous chapter—the pure in heart are free from all the things that, proceeding from within, defile a man and cut him off from fellowship with God. All the thoughts and motives and intentions behind their conduct are clean, above board, and secure of approval when scrutinised in the most searching light. ‘Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.’ (Ps. xxiv. 4.) ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God.’ (Ps. li. 10.)

There are no ‘Geheimnisse’ in religion, nothing that is not equally open to every member of the human race. There are no specially privileged races or nations or classes or professions. Be a man Jew or Gentile, English or Dutch, king or peasant, cleric or layman, miner or shepherd, if he gains the vision of God at all, it comes to him according as his heart is pure. The conditions are the same for all. That a man’s insight into moral and spiritual truth is affected by the condition of his character and by his manner of life has been recognised by the great teachers of mankind all through the centuries from Aristotle onwards.

(7). *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called Sons of God.* At first sight there seems to be neither paradox nor polemic in this Beatitude, but closer examination reveals a sharp protest against a fiercely nationalist religion. The Jews were convinced that they were *the* people—other nations might be servants of God, but they were sons of God. In the Old Testament Israel is declared to be God’s son, God’s first-born, God’s child, uniquely and supremely loved: for example, ‘When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt’ (Hosea xi. 1). The uniqueness of Israel is one of the facts of history. All our loftiest moral ideas and sublimest religious conceptions have come through the Jewish race. Athanasius could fairly say that Israel is



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'the sacred school of the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life for all mankind.'<sup>1</sup>

Many Jews, however, had become arrogant. They forgot that their exalted position was due to their function and not to their nationality. They entertained extravagant political hopes, and were looking to *war*—war waged by God Himself, or by the Messiah as God's representative, or by themselves as God's people—as the means whereby their world destiny was to be achieved.

In flat contradiction to all these ideas Jesus here gives a sharp reminder that a special degree of kinship to God is not a matter of nationality, but of likeness to God, and God is not a God of war but a God of peace. 'Blessed are they who seek to create peace, for it is they—and not those who yearn by warlike methods to assert their political supremacy over the rest of mankind—who are the true sons of God.

The significance of this saying for our modern world is profound. To create conditions that make for peace is, at this critical stage of human civilisation, the noblest work that any body of men can undertake, and those who strive to do it deserve to be called 'the sons of God', for it is God's work they are doing and one of God's purposes for mankind that they are seeking to achieve. It is surely one of the greatest ironies that the Greek word for 'creators of peace' (εἰρηνοποιοί) has been appropriated in its Latin form by those designated 'pacifists', (a corruption of 'pacifist'). Their characteristic contribution to the cause of world-peace is the policy of non-resistance, non-participation in war in any circumstances. The refusal to take part in any *aggressive* war is in perfect harmony with the spirit of this Beatitude. But that, unfortunately, does not exhaust the problem. There are, alas! all too many people in the world who have no scruples about aggression, and to adopt a policy of non-resistance to them is to betray mankind, to deliver millions of human beings into the hands of tyrants

<sup>1</sup> *De Incarnatione*, XII.

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who will suppress all opinions not to their liking by beatings, by torture, by the executioner's axe, by the firing squad and the gas-chamber. Is it 'making peace' to allow the basest and most brutal of men to rule the world's roost? Is the world 'at peace' when it is controlled by men who enforce their will upon their fellows by the threat of bombardment from the air? To be a peace-maker, that is a *creator* of peace, is the most difficult task to which any man can set his hand. To suppose that 'non-resistance' solves the problem is a childish error. To be a peace-maker requires the shrewdness of the serpent as well as the guilelessness of the dove. The idealist who naïvely assumes that all other men are inspired by the same ideals as himself is indulging in a dangerous delusion, which may easily prove costly to other people in suffering and sorrow, in tears and blood. The great task before the statesmen of the world to-day is to devise ways and means of preventing aggression and of securing a pacific solution of the disputes which will inevitably arise so long as nations are nations and men are men. It was because he addressed himself with such wisdom and sagacity and enthusiasm and passion to that task that the late Franklin D. Roosevelt deserves to be numbered among the peacemakers who will be called sons of God. The real foundations of peace are moral and spiritual. The real peacemakers are men who are so fired with enthusiasm for humanity, so convinced of the brotherhood of man, that they seek, in season and out of season, and at whatever cost, justice and fair-play not only for their own country but for all mankind. Peace will not be firmly established until the time has arrived when, as Woodrow Wilson suggested, men will be as ashamed of being disloyal to humanity as they are now of being disloyal to their country. To endeavour to bring men round to that view-point is to be a real peacemaker. The spirit of the peacemaker is perfectly expressed by a passage from the letters missive of Edward VI: 'Forasmuch as the great and Almighty God hath given unto mankind above all living creatures, such an heart and

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desire, that every man desireth to join friendship with other, to love and be loved, also to give and receive mutual benefits; it is therefore the duty of all men according to their power, to maintain and increase this desire in every man, with well deserving to all men, and especially to show their good affection to such as being moved with this desire come to them from far countries . . . For the God of Heaven and Earth, greatly providing for all mankind, would not that all things should be found in one region, to the end that one should have need of another; that by this means Friendship might be established among all men, and every one seek to gratify all.<sup>1</sup> It is those who actively seek to create the conditions that make for goodwill and peace who are the real peace-makers.

(8). *Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.* Here the paradox is obvious—those who suffer or even die a martyr's death for the sake of a good cause are pronounced blessed. This word of the Master must have brought great comfort to the early Christians when they were called upon to face death in gruesome forms for the sake of the faith. 'If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name' (1 Pet. iv. 16).

On the purely ethical side, we are here reminded that a genuinely good man will hold fast to his virtue whatever the cost; he cannot be bribed or cajoled or threatened into connivance at wrong or the surrender of principle or the hauling down of his flag; he has an exacting and an unconsenting conscience to which he remains true whatever the suffering or the sacrifice involved; he stands by what he deems to be right, whatever the consequences. Similarly the faithful champion of a good cause sticks to his guns whatever happens. For instance, a few years ago, Sir Rabindranath Tagore visited Tokyo, and received an uproarious welcome; but when he attacked militarist imperialism in his

<sup>1</sup> H.J. January 1932, p. 356.

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public speeches, his popularity vanished over-night—he had abundant reason to be proud of his unpopularity. The message of this Beatitude is that any good man, worthy of the name, is prepared to endure ridicule, obloquy, ostracism, the hatred of the community, and if need be, physical suffering and death.

Such then is the disposition of the New Humanity, of men regenerated under the rule of God, born into the Kingdom of God: they cherish moral and spiritual values more than any earthly goods; they realise that the hardships of life can be made to minister to their moral and spiritual advance; they seek to serve rather than to dominate; so far from being self-satisfied, they aspire continually after higher things; they are swift to show mercy and compassion; they covet clean hands and pure hearts; they do everything in their power to promote goodwill, peace and concord between man and man, class and class, nation and nation, race and race; they have the courage of their moral convictions and cannot be deflected from their purpose either by the scorn or the cruelty of their fellows. If such is some small fraction of the Christian message, can any sane person doubt its relevance to the modern world? Does not the one hope of the world lie in a New Humanity of this type?

### (d) THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

According to Plato there are four cardinal virtues: Wisdom (*σοφία*), Courage (*ἀνδρεία*), Orderliness (*σωφροσύνη*) and Uprightness (*δικαιοσύνη*). It would be fair to say that all these virtues were recognised by Jesus as cardinal. He conceived of all his teaching as Wisdom, and likened the man who obeyed it to a wise builder who built his house on solid rock, while the man who ignored it was compared to a foolish man who built on sand. He labelled the man who stored up treasure for himself and was not rich toward God—'fool'. Of course, His conception of wisdom was Semitic and not Greek, for to Him, wisdom was sound moral

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and spiritual insight and understanding and not the predominantly intellectual thing it was to the Greeks. All that the Greek meant by Orderliness is emphasised in the teaching of Jesus, while as for Uprightness the whole Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of Jesus' conception of it. If it is objected that Jesus never mentioned Courage as a virtue, it is a sufficient reply that though the word *ἀνδρεία* does not occur in the Gospels there are many references to the quality it denotes, which, when it is mentioned by name at all, is called *ὑπομονή*, endurance. Courage was commonly thought of in the ancient world (even by Aristotle), as a soldierly quality, a purely military virtue, though, as one would have expected, Socrates recognised that it was more than that and appealed to those 'who are courageous in perils of the sea, and who in disease, or in poverty, or again in politics, are courageous; and not only courageous against pain or fear, but mighty to contend against desires and pleasures.'<sup>1</sup> Courage of the latter kind was an outstanding feature of the character of Jesus Himself, as is clear from the Gospels. He was utterly fearless in His proclamation of the truth of God, and never wavered or temporised or 'soft-pedalled' as a teacher, even when He knew that what He was saying would arouse a bitter and highly dangerous opposition. 'Master we know that thou art true, and that thou carest for no man; for thou showest no favouritism, but in truth teachest the way of God' (Mark xii. 14)—such was the testimony of His enemies to His courage. Behind the utterance of such a parable as that which exalted, to a Jewish audience, the hated Samaritan above Jewish priest or Levite, there was extraordinary moral courage—as there was behind the Cleansing of the Temple, which was a flinging down of the gauntlet. This moral courage was backed by a superb physical courage as is clear from His decision to go to Jerusalem, though well aware that He was running into the jaws of violent death. He called for the same courage in His disciples

<sup>1</sup> *Laches*, para. 191.

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as was exemplified in His own life. 'Fear not them that kill the body' (Matt. x. 28). No threat of scourging or of death itself was to deter them from their mission. No matter what the difficulties and trials and disappointments associated with their faith and work, they were to persevere in it. 'He that has endured (*ὑπομείνας*) to the end will be saved' (Matt. xxiv. 13); 'By your steadfast endurance (*ὑπομονῇ*) you will win your souls' (Luke xxi. 19).

Nor can it be said that Courage has not been conspicuous in the followers of Christ. The courage of the martyrs was remarkable—they deliberately chose loyalty to Christ and death in a horrible form in preference to apostasy and the sparing of their lives. Martin Luther consciously and deliberately risked death by fire when he defied the Spiritual and Temporal Powers of his day. The courage displayed by many pioneer missionaries has not been excelled by any soldier in battle. No less important, though far less spectacular, is the courage displayed by Christian people who, in life's more ordinary ways, have struggled on against mighty odds, persevered in the teeth of insuperable difficulties and crushing disappointments, and have been loyal to conscience no matter what the cost. The Christian, no less than the ancient Greek, values and exemplifies courage, 'the lovely virtue—the rib of Himself that God sent down to His children' (Barrie).

While Jesus, in His own characteristic way, stressed the four cardinal virtues of the ancient Greeks, there were also other virtues not recognised by Hellas which were no less cardinal in His sight. The place of Gentleness and Compassion and Peaceableness in His scheme of virtues has already been made clear. It remains to consider two others: Humility and a Forgiving Spirit.

1. *Humility* (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*).

The Greek word for humility does not occur in the Gospels, and yet humility might fairly be regarded as the motif of all the teaching of Jesus. The ancients do not appear to have regarded humility as a virtue at all. The adjective *ταπεινός*, 'humble' was

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generally used in a bad sense, and meant 'grovelling', 'abject', 'mean'. For instance, Epictetus asks: 'Who wishes to live disillusioned, prostrate, discontented, humble?'<sup>1</sup> It was apparently through the teaching of Jesus that humility came to be regarded as a virtue. 'The disposition of humility was pre-eminently and almost exclusively a Christian virtue.'<sup>2</sup> Similarly Gladstone declared that 'humility as a sovereign grace is the creation of Christianity.'<sup>3</sup>

In the modern world there has been a certain reaction against Christian humility—a reaction due largely to a misunderstanding of what it really is. It is the travesties of Christian humility that are largely responsible for the revolt. Humility is not utter self-depreciation. It is true that the saints of the Middle Ages and many of the evangelicals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries used language of self-depreciation and reprobation which would have been excessive if applied to the worst criminals. John Bunyan, for instance, spoke of himself as one who was 'as loathsome as a toad', and to describe oneself as a 'worm' was a favourite custom. The modern man finds something unreal in such absolute self-condemnation, and he feels that if this is humility he prefers not to be humble. In a sense he is quite right. A man who indulges in wholesome self-condemnation reveals that he is at least aware of a high moral standard and of an obligation to reach it, and that fact belies his theory that he is (as he protests) totally depraved and worthless. Nor is humility, as many suppose, a kind of nerveless self-distrust that paralyses all initiative and wholesome ambition, the kind of thing to which Cowper refers in the well-known lines:

*Now William was a modest youth,  
His modesty was such,  
That one must say, to tell the truth,  
He really had too much.*

<sup>1</sup> IV, i, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, op. cit. ii, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> Morley's *Life*, iii, p. 466.

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Further, Dickens' portraiture of Uriah Heep has led some people to think of humility as a kind of deceitful, servile grovelling before men.

In view of all these misunderstandings of humility, the modern emphasis is laid rather on self-respect, self-confidence, and human equality. It is deemed a sounder ethical procedure to train the young to respect themselves than to depreciate and despise themselves—but self-respect and true humility can go together. Similarly there are young people who need to be inspired with self-confidence because of the debilitating effects of that utter self-distrust to which they are prone—and again reasonable self-confidence is not incompatible with true humility. St. Paul was one of the humblest of men but was at the same time quite aware of his powers and of his achievements. It is no less clear that a man can be truly humble without any cringing before his fellows.

What, then, did Jesus mean by Humility? When He described Himself as 'lowly (*ταπεινός*) in heart' (Matt. xi. 29) He meant that He, unlike the religious leaders of His day, did not look down on the masses with superior scorn but regarded them with sympathy and understanding. His reply to the Rich Ruler, 'Why callest thou me good?' (Mark x. 18) was a humble expression of His recognition that absolute goodness is to be found only in God, and that God is the ultimate source of all human goodness. He urges men, in their ordinary intercourse with their fellows, to think soberly of themselves by eschewing all exaggerated ideas of their own importance. 'He that exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles (*ταπεινῶν*) himself will be exalted.' (Luke xiv. 11.)

But it is humility towards God that He stresses most. He pronounces 'blessed' those who are deeply dissatisfied with themselves, and look to God to make better men of them. 'God be merciful to me, sinner that I am' is the only right attitude for a man to assume before God. All have need humbly to pray 'Forgive us our trespasses.' No man can enter the Kingdom of God



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unless he humbles himself as a little child and thus becomes teachable and receptive. It is only as a man is aware of his own inner deficiencies, of the discrepancy between what he ought to be and what he is, of his need of forgiveness and grace, in other words, only as he is humble, that his soul is open towards God.

*Have I knowledge? Confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare!  
Have I forethought? How purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!  
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul, which in bending upraises it too)  
The submission of Man's nothing perfect to God's all-complete,  
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His feet.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus Christian humility can be described as receptivity, and the sense that any gifts or graces we possess are not our own creation but have their source in God. To be vain about *gifts* is a contradiction in terms. 'What has thou that thou didst not receive? And if thou didst receive it, why dost thou boast as if thou didst not receive it?' (1 Cor. iv. 7). Just as obvious conceit in a musician or a public speaker vitiates his public performance, so pride in a virtue ruins it. The humble man, sober in his estimate of himself, realises that any gifts or grace he possesses he has received. Such humility of spirit has been justly termed 'the most exquisite flower of the moral life.'

Jesus implies that this attitude of humility towards God is the constant mood of the good man, and that out of it every good thing springs and grows. Humility is thus one of the chief links that bind religion and ethics together. William Law, therefore, rightly declares humility to be 'the soil of all virtues.'<sup>2</sup> And Tennyson struck a true Christian note in the lines:

*O Son, thou hast not true humility,  
The highest virtue—mother of them all,<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Browning, 'Saul', XVII.

<sup>2</sup> *Serious Call*, p. 263 (Everyman edition).

<sup>3</sup> 'The Holy Grail'.

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—and such a rebuke might have been fittingly addressed to Aristotle's 'high souled man'.

### *2. The Forgiving Spirit.*

Jesus' insistence that a man should always be willing to forgive has been described as His 'most striking innovation in morality.' When a Christian spirit is spoken of it is usually a forgiving spirit that is meant. One of the most horrible features of the ancient world was the desire for vengeance and the intense satisfaction men found in doing the maximum mischief to their enemies. This spirit was rampant even amongst such highly civilised peoples as the Greeks and Romans. A Roman triumph was a morally repulsive phenomenon. *Vae victis!* It is no small achievement on the part of Christianity to have checked the worst barbarities of war by the spirit of chivalry, which has been defined as the union of the Christian and military ideals, so far as such incompatibles can be blended. The chivalrous soldier did at least stand for clean fighting, and, above all, for mercy to a vanquished foe. It is surely significant that the Nazis who repudiated Christianity also revived some of the worst excesses of ancient warfare. While in ancient times men gloried in revenge, it can be said that to-day most normal men are ashamed of vindictive feelings—a direct result of the teaching of Jesus. As Sir John Seeley says: 'The spirit of revenge, if not expelled from human life, has been at least dethroned and fettered by Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

The question of non-retaliation will be considered in the next chapter, here we are concerned solely with the forgiving spirit. Jesus insists that a man cannot worship so long as, through his own fault, he is on bad terms with a fellow creature (Matt. v. 24). It is impossible for a man really to pray unless he has shown readiness to forgive (Mark xi. 25). 'If thy brother sins against thee, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against thee

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. p. 330.

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seven times during the day, and seven times turns to thee and says, I repent, thou art to forgive him' (Luke xvii. 3-4). One must be prepared to forgive not merely seven times, but seventy times seven (Matt. xviii. 22). Jesus declares that there is no forgiveness from God for the man who refuses to forgive his brother. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, He tells the story of a man who after having been forgiven a debt of £2,500,000 refused to forgive a fellow servant a debt of £5, and He thus hints that man's need of God's forgiveness is so great that it is comparable to a debt which he can never repay, while the offences he is called upon to pardon are trifling in comparison. The Unmerciful Servant was handed over to the gaolers until he paid the whole debt. 'So will your heavenly Father do with you, if you forgive not each of you his brother from your hearts' (Matt. xviii. 35). The addition of the words 'from your hearts' is important, for there is a story told by H. R. Macintosh of a Scot who, fearing he was on his deathbed, made overtures of peace to a man with whom he had fallen out years before. They shook hands in amity. But as the quondam offender left the room, the invalid roused himself to say: 'Remember, if I get over this, the old quarrel stands!' In the behaviour of the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son we have a perfect example of what Jesus means by the spirit of forgiveness. We can always be ready to forgive as soon as the conditions are satisfied, but we cannot always actually forgive. The father was always ready to forgive his wayward son, but he could not actually forgive him until he had come to himself, realised his utter unworthiness to be a son, and confessing his sin against his father and against God, had returned home.

This question of a 'forgiving spirit' must not be sentimentalised, as it often is. Even Jesus maintained that there was such a thing as unforgivable sin. God's forgiveness is neither unconditional nor indiscriminate—a truth which all theories of Atonement strive to state. The duty of forgiveness on man's part is made conditional

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upon the repentance of the offending party. Without repentance forgiveness is impossible—for it has to be *accepted* as well as *bestowed*. To say 'I forgive you' to a man who acknowledges no wrong is simply to make oneself absurd. It is this very simple and obvious fact which is so often overlooked by those who talk glibly about forgiving those guilty of crimes against humanity. To forgive is not just to wink good-naturedly at cruelty and wrong, and to regard it as though it had never occurred. It is immoral simply to connive 'in a forgiving spirit' at cruel wrongs committed against other people. If a wrong-doer is to be forgiven, he must repudiate the wrong he has done, recognise the enormity of his offence, and seek to make amends as far as possible; otherwise forgiveness is a pure farce, a morally spineless thing. Always *to be ready to forgive* is a Christian duty, but actual forgiveness cannot take place until the offender desires to be forgiven; and he cannot really desire to be forgiven until he recognises and regrets and repudiates his fault. To refuse to forgive a penitent offender is to display a spirit which is a flat contradiction of all that Christianity stands for.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that the cardinal virtues which characterise the Christian disciple 'are not just ethical virtues which can be practised apart from faith, but are the fruits of faith.'<sup>1</sup> For the Christian, religion and ethics are indissolubly joined.

<sup>1</sup> Tasker, *The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels*, p. 25.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHIEF MORAL IMPERATIVES OF JESUS

#### (a) A DIFFICULT EXEGETICAL PROBLEM

Scattered through the teaching of Jesus, and specially frequent in the Sermon on the Mount, are numerous moral imperatives, and their interpretation presents one of the most difficult problems of New Testament exegesis. Opinions as to their significance are almost as numerous as the interpreters. Some (e.g., Tolstoi) have insisted that they were meant to be fulfilled literally, and have found in that literal fulfilment the sum and substance of Christianity. Others again (e.g., Naumann) have claimed that these moral imperatives were without doubt literally meant by Jesus, but as they cannot be literally followed to-day, they are no longer authoritative for our times. Others (e.g., Herrmann) agree that these imperatives cannot be literally followed but nevertheless claim that they still possess validity for us to-day, and solve the problem by finding the meaning of the imperatives in the disposition which they reveal, a disposition which is essential to the Christian. Thus the imperatives are to be regarded, not as a moral code (for a moral code must be universally valid and within the power of man, and the moral imperatives of Jesus are neither), but as a vivid description of the new type of human nature which must arise in us, of how it comes into being, and of the laws of its development—and mere imperatives cannot alter human nature, for Life can be created only by Life. Others again have approached the subject from a theological standpoint, and claim that Jesus deliberately made impossible demands of us to move us to self-

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knowledge and repentance. Instead of saying with Kant, 'Thou oughtest, therefore thou canst', He says, 'Thou oughtest, but thou canst not.' Men cannot obey these imperatives so long as they remain sinful men in a sinful world, but since the imperatives set forth the will of God, they are unconditionally obligatory, and, as we are incapable of fulfilling them, the solution lies in the redemptive intervention of God. In all these views there is an element of truth, but not one of them gets to the real heart of the matter.

That the difficulty has not been created by those academically inclined is clear to the general reader of the New Testament. When he reads 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor,' he recognises straight away that if literal obedience to such a command is essential to Christian discipleship, then he is not a Christian and indeed cannot be. Does the command 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth' mean that he ought never to save money or make any provision for a future rainy day? If that is so, he has to admit that it is not only impossible for him but would also be quite wrong to yield literal obedience to such a command. When he is enjoined to 'hate' father and mother and wife and children if he wishes to be a disciple, he asks in perplexity, what it is exactly that is required of him, for Jesus elsewhere approves family affection and insists on filial devotion. When he is told that he must love his enemies, he feels immediately that he cannot rise to the height of loving (say) the inhuman creatures responsible for the atrocious sadistic cruelty that has been inflicted on human beings in German concentration camps. In the light of these facts it is understandable that it has sometimes been asserted that there are contrasts in the ethical teaching of Jesus which cannot be resolved; demands which it is quite impossible for us to fulfil; and even precepts which are opposed to what we inevitably regard as our moral duty and which it is undesirable that we should follow. It is no less clear why the plain man so often dis-

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misses the teaching of Jesus as Utopian and impossible of application to the hard realities of this present world.

The key to the solution of the difficulty is to be found in two considerations:

(1). Jesus must never be regarded as a second Moses, a new Lawgiver, drawing up a code of rules to be rigidly observed by all His disciples. To think thus is to relapse into the very 'legalism' which He condemned. 'Instead of framing laws, He stated principles, and made them so few and broad that no one could overlook them.'<sup>1</sup> Into that legalistic error the Roman Catholic Church has fallen, for, where ethical (and religious) problems are concerned, the ecclesiastical authority issues orders, and the believer submissively obeys—whether he inwardly feels and recognises the moral obligation or not; he simply bows to the authoritarian voice of the Church, so that the externality of the moral law, superseded in the teaching of Jesus by an internal moral law, is re-established in a new form. Jesus' concern was not to 'legislate', to prescribe rules and regulations for every situation in life (for casuistry was foreign to His spirit and genius), but to lead men into the Kingdom of God, that is, to bring men under the rule of God, freely accepted as the rule of their lives. A man who has thus entered into communion with God will have (as we have seen) a right disposition, a good heart—he will be a good tree that bears good fruit, he will know from within how to behave, and laws will be as superfluous to him as 'sign-posts to one who knows the road.'<sup>2</sup> *So the moral imperatives of Jesus are not 'laws', they aim at making explicit the ethical ideals and principles which are implicit in that new relationship to God into which a man enters when the Kingdom is established within him.*

(2) The moral imperatives of Jesus are not all of the same kind and are not all on the same plane. Anderson Scott has made the

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson Scott, *New Testament Ethics*, p. 72.

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useful suggestion that they are to be classified as *mandata* (or commandments), *exempla* (or illustrations) and *consilia* (or instances of urgent advice).<sup>1</sup> Though I propose gratefully to adopt this classification, I shall make a very different use of it, for *mandata* seem to me to play a very much larger part in the teaching than Anderson Scott admits, for he finds only one *mandatum*, namely the command to love God with the whole heart and one's neighbour as oneself. To describe the majority of the moral imperatives of Jesus as 'advice' or even 'urgent advice' is hardly adequate. The classification of the moral imperatives adopted here is as follows. The *mandata* are those imperatives which state principles which all who are in the Kingdom have accepted. The *exempla* are imperatives which give instances of the particular ways in which those principles can be applied. The *consilia* are imperatives which give urgent advice in some particular situation.

### (b) THE CENTRAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(1). According to Mark one of the Scribes, apparently impressed by the replies which Jesus had given to various question put to Him, wished to obtain the opinion of so wise a teacher on a question much discussed in the rabbinical schools, namely the question as to which was the greatest commandment. Though the Rabbis discussed this question and came to their own conclusions about it, yet no private opinion was regarded as justifying any neglect of other commandments, nor was it a criterion of the importance attached to it in heaven. Some Rabbis were of the opinion that the law of Sabbath observance outweighed all other commandments, but nevertheless regarded all as binding. Jesus replied that the first commandment was '*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength*', and that

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* pp. 11 ff.



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the second was '*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*', (Mark xii. 30-31; cf. Luke x. 25-28). The Scribe accepted this answer, and Jesus, recognising his understanding of moral and spiritual issues, declared that he was not far from the Kingdom of God.

It is, therefore, plain that Jesus maintained that the supreme law of life was to love God with all the energy of one's being and to love one's neighbour as oneself. The love of God manifests itself in limitless trust (cf. Matt. vii. 7-11), childlike reverence (cf. Mark x. 14-15), and unconditional obedience (cf. Matt. vii. 21). The love of neighbour means caring for his interests. These two commandments were not original with Jesus for they are found in the Old Testament (Deut. xxx. 6, and Lev. xix. 18). What was new was that Jesus saw and stressed the profound connection between the two, and summed up the whole content of religion and ethics in these two sentences. 'God is the God of love, and he who wishes to be a child of God must be caught and carried along by the stream of divine love and reflect the love of God in his own life.'<sup>1</sup> Further, in the Parable of the Kind Samaritan Jesus introduced a new conception of 'neighbour' as any human being whom it is possible to serve—whatever his race, nationality, or creed. Again, Jesus almost fused these two commands into one—the love of God is inseparable from the love of man, so that failure to love man is a palpable proof that there is no genuine love of God (cf. If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, 1 John iv. 20); and the love of man, in the deeper and wider sense of the term, is inseparable from the love of God. There are only two ways in which a man can actively love God, namely by walking humbly with God, God being ever in the background of his thought, and by showing neighbourly love to his fellow men. To this love as the one root, the one motive, Jesus traced all morality. But the love to which He referred is not a mere emotion, but a love that serves, and only as it serves is it a living reality.

<sup>1</sup> Feine, op. cit. p. 179.

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He thus imposed on the moral law a unity such as it had never known before. He implied that the whole Law with its 600 commandments, could be condensed into one simple statement, and that, if heed were paid to this, the rest could be left aside—for nobody who really loved God and his fellows would go far astray. As St. Paul pointed out, 'Love is the fulfilling of the Law' (Rom. xiii. 10) and it is obvious that if a man really loves his neighbours, he will not kill or commit adultery or steal or bear false witness or look with envious eyes on other people's property or behave in any anti-social fashion.

It is important to note that these two commands are as little 'legal' as it is possible for them to be. They neither prescribe nor forbid any particular action. 'They apply entirely to the disposition which man is to have towards God and his neighbour. Consequently they are not enforceable. If they are to be fulfilled at all, it must be by the willing obedience of man. A man can be compelled to abstain from work on the Sabbath; but he cannot be compelled to love God with all his heart. In other words, if the secret of the good life lies in these two precepts, it lies in a change of heart, an inward transformation (*μετάνοια*), the corollary to which is an outward reformation of behaviour.'<sup>1</sup>

The love of God comes *first*. It is only the love of God that can give the love of man depth and width. The great lovers of mankind who have loved and served their fellows with a burning enthusiasm which no human baseness or ingratitude could ever quench have always been men who first loved God, and it was their love of God that gave their love of man its depth, its staying power—without which the idealist so easily degenerates into the cynic. Similarly the great champions of the brotherhood of man have invariably been lovers of God, and it was their love of God that gave their love of man its all-inclusive width. This love of man (apart from all racial and national considerations) is a direct

<sup>1</sup> T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* p. 305.

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product of the love of God which introduces a new humaneness into the heart. 'The love of God is the precondition and the inspiration of the love of man, the love of man is the practical expression of the love of God.'<sup>1</sup> It might be objected that this principle of love to God and man, like Kant's ethical theory about duty, has 'form but no content'. If it were a mere ethical law or rule, there would be force in the objection, but since its appeal is not to any external rule but to the heart's love, to a right disposition, appropriate action in any given situation follows naturally and inevitably. When He states this law, Jesus makes no appeal to either reason or conscience, but when the law is accepted and acted on, reason confirms and conscience approves. Such, then, is the central principle of the good life. Thus, once more, in the ethical teaching of Jesus, morality loses the form of external law and becomes an internal life-principle.

One difficulty, however, remains. Can anybody be required to 'love'? Is there really an imperative mood of the verb 'love'? As Sir David Ross says: 'We cannot seriously say of anyone that he ought to have a certain emotion, because we do not think it is in his power to acquire it forthwith.'<sup>2</sup> For Jewish Rabbis and Jesus this was not a serious question, because they thought in terms of proofs of love in actual deeds, so that for them this imperative meant: 'Prove by your actions that you love God and your neighbour.' To the modern mind the difficulty arises in the main from the fact that 'love' is normally a somewhat emotional word, and emotions cannot be commanded. In Greek there are four words for 'love', while our one English word has to do duty in all four senses. The word *ἔρως* stood for the love between the sexes, and in this sense of the word, nobody can love to order; the love between a lad and a lass is based on and conditioned by physical and psychical attraction—and when the attraction is

<sup>1</sup> Streeter, *Reality*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 55.

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simply not there, love is impossible. The word *φιλία* denoted the inclination or liking of one person for another which leads to friendship. The passionate desire which characterises *ἔρως* is absent from *φιλία*, but still one cannot even feel a liking for another person at the word of command; psychical attraction is essential to friendship. The word *στοργή* referred to family affection. The emotional element in all three words is pronounced. The fourth word *ἀγάπη*, in (pre-biblical Greek the noun hardly exists, though the verb *ἀγαπᾶν* is common), is very different. In classical Greek it had nothing of the force and spell of *ἔρως*, and scarcely any of the warmth either of *φιλία* or *στοργή*. It meant often enough no more than to be contented with something, or to prefer one thing or person to another. "*Ἐρως* is determined by a more or less indefinite craving for an object. '*Αγαπᾶν* is determined by the subject, is a free, determined act.'<sup>1</sup> In Christian circles *ἀγάπη* stood for a love which does not crave but gives. Anderson Scott analyses it into three elements, recognition, consideration, care. It is clearly quite in order for anybody to tell us to *recognise* that there are other people in the world besides ourselves, to *consider* the interests of others as well as our own, to *care* for the welfare of others. When we thus recognise, consider and care for a fellow-creature we 'love' him in the New Testament sense of the term. It is equally in order to tell us to take God into our reckoning, to consider what He would have us do; and to make it our care to do His will; and when we thus behave towards God, we love God. If the 'love' here spoken of were simply a matter of taste and inclination, it would be meaningless to say: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' just as it would be senseless to say 'Thou shalt like tomatoes.' Our tastes, our inclinations, our likes and dislikes, our capacity to 'fall in love' are largely beyond our control. But to 'love' in the sense of recognising and considering and caring is a matter that lies within the control of the will, and

<sup>1</sup> Stauffer, *T.W.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 37.

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therefore we can rightly be commanded to 'love' in this sense of the term.

From all this there follows a rather remarkable result—it is possible to love (*ἀγαπᾶν*) one whom we do not (for the time being, at least) like. It is in this way that a real solution can be found of the difficult problem of 'loving our enemies' which will come up for discussion later on. Apart altogether from 'enemies' there are awkward people whom we find it impossible really to like, and yet we can resolve to do the right and fair thing by them and to promote their interests as far as we can. This does not mean that 'love' is cold. Recognition may be tepid enough, but, wherever there is real consideration and care for another, there is warmth.

To sum up this part of our discussion: the love of God is the inspiration of life, a great moral dynamic; and the love of man is the clue to the overwhelming majority of the problems of conduct. He who loves God and loves his neighbour as himself is on the high-road to the highest ethical achievement possible to man.

(2). Closely akin to the second of the commandments just considered is the Golden Rule. '*Whatsoever you wish men to do to you, do you also to them.*' The positiveness of the formulation of the Golden Rule by Jesus has already been noted—in contrast to its negative form in Jewish literature. The Golden Rule has often come in for criticism. It has even been dismissed as amoral, as mere egoistic calculation. But whoever sees nothing in this precept but such an injunction as : Do the right thing by others that they may do the right thing by you, is as blind as a bat. It is consideration for others and not for oneself that is here enjoined. The Golden Rule has been declared to be useless as a guide to conduct. The grounds for such an assertion are by no means clear. It is true, of course, that in view of the frailties of our nature we often find it difficult to do by others as we should like others to do by us. It

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is true again that we shall probably never live completely by the Golden Rule. But ideals that are easily attained are useless as ideals. It is only as we strive to reach the so-called impossible ideals that we can make a steady moral advance. What Jesus here pleads for is that we should try to put ourselves in our brother's place, to enter into his thoughts and to share his feelings. So far from such a procedure being 'useless', the plain truth is that there is no hope of a better and kinder future for mankind unless men, in their dealings with one another, seek increasingly to behave in just that fashion. True, the Golden Rule is probably not much use as long as it is regarded as a mere 'moral tag'. But Jesus does not deal in moral tags. His concern is all the time with men's nature and disposition. His real plea here is that we should seek by the grace of God to become men of such a nature and disposition that we spontaneously and inevitably seek to do by others as we should like others to do by us. We shall do so only as sympathetic imagination is woven into the warp and woof of our thought and life. Sympathetic imagination is something that is acquired without fail when we share in the love of God, and it is a quality which enables us to make clear to our own minds what is already real, and perhaps terribly real, in the experience of other people, though not in our own. This sympathetic imagination played an extraordinary part in the life of Jesus Himself, enabling Him to stand in other people's shoes, to think their thoughts, to share their feelings and to see life's multifarious problems just as they saw them. Such sympathetic imagination

*Is but another name for absolute power  
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
And Reason in her most exalted mood.<sup>1</sup>*

It is surely clear that if employer and employee, mistress and maid, buyer and seller, reflected hard and often as to how they would

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, 'The Prelude', Book XIV.

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like the other party to behave if their positions were reversed, social life would be raised to new heights. Sir Frederick Treves' story of the Elephant Man is a superb example of the operation of the Golden Rule. Not one of the social evils that have disfigured human history and swelled the tale of man's inhumanity to man would ever have arisen if men had been of such a nature as spontaneously to observe the Golden Rule. How, for instance, could any man have ever taken part in the business of kidnapping natives of West Africa and selling them as slaves for the sugar plantations and cotton fields of the West, if he had been disposed to do by others as he wanted others to do by him? Would any nation in a spirit of militarist aggression ever strike down its neighbours without mercy, pity, or restraint, if it thought and acted in terms of the Golden Rule? Thus it is sheer arrogance to dismiss this precept as 'useless', for its faithful application to life would transfigure and transform all human relations—private, social, industrial, national and international. Those who are in the Kingdom of God have such a disposition that they naturally do to others as they would be done by.

(3). It is clear that if ever a man is to care for his neighbour as for himself and to observe the Golden Rule he must undergo a radical change. Inordinate self-love, an evil thing in itself and the source and spring of all other evils, must be renounced. Hence the imperative '*Repent!*' (μετανοεῖτε). What Jesus here calls for is something almost infinitely more than the mere regret for wrongdoing. He demands a complete change of front. Repentance, in Christ's sense of the term, concerns the three cardinal modes of being—knowing, feeling, willing, and is thus an affair of personality as a whole. In such repentance, inordinate self-love is recognised as evil, disliked as evil, and as evil disowned. Mere recognition is not enough, for even when a man says, 'Evil, be thou my good', and thus assumes a defiant attitude, he at least recognises evil as evil. Mere dislike of evil is not enough, for a man may dis-

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like evil because of its results and not because of its nature, in which case his dislike may take the form of remorse or despair. Mere disowning is not enough, for a man may refuse to embark on an evil course simply through fear of the consequences, otherwise he would raise no objection. But when a man recognises evil as evil, dislikes it because it is evil, and disowns it, not because of its consequences but because of its character, than his repentance is complete. In this sense of the term, repentance is not just a solitary act, but something that results in a permanent transformation of the mind—a permanent new attitude towards God and man.

The imperatives hitherto considered are concerned primarily with attitudes and states of mind. We now turn to those which deal with specific actions.

(4). Swearing was a very common practice amongst the Jews. The name of God was usually avoided, but there were many substitutes for it: Heaven, earth, Jerusalem, the 'life of thy head', the temple, the altar, the covenant, the Law, Moses, 'my life', 'the life of my children', and so on.<sup>1</sup> T. R. Glover describes the haggling that went on in the market place thus: 'The buyer swears "on his head" that he will not give more than so much; then, "by the altar" he won't get the thing. "By the earth" it isn't worth it; "by the heaven" the seller gave that for it. So the battle rages and at last a bargain is struck.'<sup>2</sup> Both buyer and seller sought to get the better of each other, and to deceive each other by solemn oaths. 'Bad, bad', says the buyer; but when he is gone, he brags (Prov. xx. 14). A false statement was often accompanied by an oath so solemn that the hearer was convinced that it must be true, on the ground that no one would have the temerity to link a lie with so solemn an appeal to God. Evidently the Hitlerian idea that the solemn declaration of a very big lie is sure to command credence

<sup>1</sup> See *S.B.* Vol. I, pp. 334-6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jesus of History*, p. 37.



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by its very audacity was nothing new. When Peter denied his Master, he accompanied his denial with oaths and curses, that is, he swore by God, called God to witness, that Jesus of Nazareth was a complete stranger to him and that he had had no personal contacts whatsoever with him. Peter was simply following a common Jewish custom—cloaking a lie with solemn oaths. Thus swearing was a device of insincerity. Hence Jesus said: '*I tell you not to swear at all . . . but let your speech be yea, yea, nay, nay; and what is in excess of these is from the Evil One*' (Matt. v. 35 and 37).

In this passage, two problems are raised, the religious problem of the irreverent and frivolous use of the name of God, or of substitutes for it, in connection with oaths (compare Ecclus. xxiii. 9: Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One), and the ethical problem of honour and sincerity in speech. The latter only concerns us here. Jesus is pleading for sincerity and honest downrightness in conversation. A man should mean what he says—his Yes should mean Yes, and his No should mean No, so that his ungarnished statements should carry with them the authority of truthfulness. The necessity to garnish statements with oaths arises from the evil desire to obscure the truth.

This is clearly one of the central problems of ethics. In social life a man should show himself a man of honour and sincerity, whose word can be relied upon. In commercial and industrial life, the spoken word should be as good as a bond, contracts duly carried out, promises kept. The terrible pass to which international affairs have come is due to no small extent to faithlessness and untruthfulness.<sup>1</sup> The connection between diplomacy and duplicity is notorious. Cavour is reported to have said on one occasion: 'I always know how to mislead diplomatists—I tell them the truth.' When solemn pacts and covenants are contemptuously flung into

<sup>1</sup> 'This earth has been brought to its present pass by the neglect of the pledged word'.—Lord Vansittart, *Bones of Contention*, p. 82.

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the waste-paper basket and the pledged word cynically broken, nations are heading for disaster. In our own times we have had many illustrations of this utter faithlessness. The League of Nations failed, in the main, because the signatories of the Covenant broke the Covenant they had signed. Hitler's deception has never been equalled by any other ruler of a great country—four days before the attack on Holland, when all the plans for it had been laid, he solemnly assured the Dutch Government through his ambassador at the Hague that all its fears of invasion were groundless! Unless honour and truthfulness and good faith are firmly established in international intercourse, unparalleled disaster will overtake the human race. 'Let your Yea mean Yea, and let your Nay mean Nay,' is a word that might fittingly be addressed to every statesman and diplomat.

It is with this vitally important ethical question of honest dealing and good faith that Jesus is here concerned. To see in this saying nothing but the absolute prohibition of an oath in any circumstances, as the Anabaptists, Quakers, and Tolstoi did, is to fail to see the wood for the trees. All that is absolutely forbidden is the use of oaths as a means of deception in the ordinary intercourse of life. There are occasions when a solemn declaration of honesty of purpose can fairly be required. It would clearly be absurd to suggest that the oath taken by the King at his coronation is in any way a contravention of the teaching of Christ. Precisely the same applies to the oath of a witness in a police or assize court, by which he pledges himself to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Even the Essenes, of whom Josephus says: 'They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury, for they say that he who cannot be believed without swearing to God is condemned already',<sup>1</sup> nevertheless required of new members

<sup>1</sup> *Wars of the Jews*, Vol. II, iii, 6.

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the solemn oath of initiation. And Jesus Himself, when, according to Matthew (xxvi. 63), the High Priest put Him on oath, 'I demand that you tell us on your oath by the living God whether you are the Messiah or not', raised no protest. It is obvious that there are many situations in life when a man is necessarily required to affirm in the most solemn terms that he will speak the truth. To transform the protest of Jesus against oaths as a means of deception into an absolute prohibition of asseverations on all occasions is an example of the absurd literalism which makes ridiculous the very truth it seeks to defend and propagate.

It is one of the noblest characteristics of citizens of the Kingdom of God that they are honest, truthful, utterly trustworthy and reliable—and in this matter the Quakers have often shone like stars in a dark world—so that in this passage Jesus is not merely giving 'advice' but stating one of the laws of the Kingdom of God to which its citizens inevitably conform.

(5). It is a common idea that Jesus stood for a policy of absolute non-resistance in the face of evil. Those who are of this opinion are divided into two classes: some hold that it is the bounden duty of the Christian to adopt this policy of non-resistance, while others urge that at this point even the professing Christian in the modern world has to recognise that literal obedience is impossible. Of the former class, Tolstoi was perhaps the chief representative in modern times. He went so far as to declare that even a madman running amock should not be restrained by force; he was prepared to scrap the police system; and he denied the right of any government to compel obedience to the law. He reacted so violently against the cruel use of force in Russia under the old Tsarist régime that he wished to proscribe the use of force altogether, and failed to recognise that there is such a thing as the legitimate and righteous use of force. His repudiation of tyranny was so violent that it flung him into anarchy. If Tolstoi's interpretation of the teaching of Jesus was right, the Christian ought pas-

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sively to tolerate gangsters and thugs and hooligans, and would feel bound to condemn the part played by the British navy in the suppression of the slave trade—for even after the trade had been declared illegal at Westminster, the slave traders for many years tried to carry on business as usual, until they were scotched by cruisers and destroyers which, with their guns ready for action, compelled them to restore their wretched captives to their homes. Again, if Tolstoi's interpretation was correct, it was our Christian duty not in any way actively to resist the Nazis, but to allow them to make ordered civilisation impossible, to dragoon nation after nation into submission to their will by the threat of bombardment from the air, to suppress all ideas uncongenial to them by the hideous subhuman cruelty of concentration camps, to bring back the darkest of dark ages, to put out the lamps not only in Europe, but eventually all over the world, and ruthlessly to destroy all that was precious to the human race (Christianity included). The commonsense of mankind—and commonsense is as truly the gift of God as the Holy Spirit—rejects such anarchic notions as fantastic and absurd. As Latourette has recently pointed out: 'However incompatible the spirit of Jesus and armed force may be, and however unpleasant it may be to acknowledge the fact, as a matter of plain history, the latter has often made it possible for the former to survive.'<sup>1</sup> Further, even if a Christian feels that he ought passively to endure any cruelty or wrong that bad men think fit to inflict on himself, how is he to react when the cruelty and wrong are inflicted on others, Chinese, Abyssinians, Czechs or Poles? Is he simply to wring his hands and regretfully confess that nothing can be done and that what can't be mended must be endured? Granted that it is no easy task to reconcile the use of armed force with Christian discipleship, it is a thousand times more difficult to reconcile with Christian discipleship complete passivity when monstrous wrongs are being perpetrated on

<sup>1</sup> *The Unquenchable Light*, p. 24.

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our fellow-creatures. Conscience itself protests against the idea that we are not to resist evil of any kind or in any way. Further, Jesus Himself resisted evil as His Cleansing of the Temple, His bitter and uncompromising exposure of the sins of the Scribes and Pharisees and His declaration that there were people in the world who deserved to have millstones tied round their necks and to be drowned in the depths of the sea, so clearly prove.

So let us examine carefully what it really is that Jesus teaches. The context is vitally important. *'You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I tell you not to resist him that is evil'* (μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ). The first question to be decided is this: Is τῷ πονηρῷ neuter or masculine? The A.V. takes it as neuter 'evil', while the R.V. takes it as masculine, 'him that is evil.' E. F. Scott regards it as masculine and refers it to the Evil One, so that Jesus was saying in effect, 'Do not oppose the devil with his own weapons'<sup>1</sup>—but such an idea, in this context, seems to be rather far-fetched. It is best to follow the R.V. and to render 'him that is evil.' That Jesus should have suggested that evil is never to be resisted is clearly impossible, for there are countless wrongs both in the world outside us and in our own hearts which it is our Christian duty to resist. What, then, does Jesus mean? The Old Testament Law which He quotes, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' (Exod. xxi. 24), was designed to put a check on private revenge. In the old days of lynch law, revenge was excessive. If A knocked one of B's eyes out, B was not satisfied until he had knocked both A's eyes out. The Old Testament law, therefore, registered a considerable advance. It substituted legal procedure for a system under which every man was a law to himself. This law was to be administered by magistrates, and not by the aggrieved person. And the penalty was fixed—one eye (not both eyes) was to be given for an eye, and one tooth (not a whole row of uppers) for a tooth—this law was restrictive rather than per-

<sup>1</sup> *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 74.

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missive. Jesus takes higher ground still. He claims that while the Law had checked vindictive passion He wishes to abolish it altogether. He insists that men ought not to find revenge sweet and that the disciple of the Kingdom of God who has been wronged will not soil himself with a counter wrong. There is no idea here of absolute non-resistance to evil of any kind. The idea is simply and solely that of the renunciation of the passion for retaliation. 'Do not exact vengeance for personal wrongs.' Thus the real meaning of the saying is: 'I tell you not to retaliate on the man who is ill-disposed to you.' We have a perfect example of this type of behaviour in the life of Jesus Himself. When the people of a certain Samaritan village refused to receive Him, James and John were out for vengeance and proposed that He should call down fire from heaven to destroy them. But Jesus rebuked them and said: 'You know not what manner of spirit you are of' (Luke ix. 52 ff.). In other words Jesus refused to show spiteful personal resentment to people who had shown ill-will to Him.

In this passage, then, Jesus' thought is concentrated on the question of *non-vindictiveness in personal relations*. All other considerations, obligations, circumstances and needs, are for the moment, left out of account. The question of the maintenance of public law and order is not envisaged; that was something which was simply taken for granted. Police action to-day against a malefactor who is preying on the community is not vindictive, but is taken for the protection of the community against those who are anti-socially inclined; and, in a humane State, the treatment of the criminal is not merely retributive, but aims also at being corrective. Anarchy is so great an evil that public law and order must be maintained at all costs. The principle that applies to the individual State applies also to international relations. There, too, public law and public right must be the basis of the dealings of States with one another. A nation that proposes to make brute force the umpire and arbiter in international affairs must, of neces-

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sity, be treated as an outlaw. One of the weaknesses of the League of Nations established in 1919 was that it had no means of enforcing respect for its decisions and thus proved a mere dove that could only coo amid birds armed with fearsome beaks and formidable talons. To vindicate the majesty of international law and order—even with armed might—against pirates and aggressors is not vindictive action, for the exercise of force ceases the moment that the offenders against society or against mankind lay aside their weapons and submit to the reign of law and order. To turn Jesus' condemnation of personal vindictiveness into a precept that encourages national and international anarchy and plays into the hands of depraved and brutal men, who propose to hold up their fellows to ransom, is a grave exegetical error and a monstrous disservice to the Christian cause. It is vindictiveness and vindictiveness alone that is here forbidden, and the question of the measures necessary for the maintenance of ordered civilisation is not at issue at all.

On the question of war Jesus made no pronouncement. When the Centurion at Capernaum suggested that just as his subordinates yielded prompt military obedience to him so the powers at the disposal of Jesus would, at his bidding, go and heal the sick servant, Jesus took no exception to the military illustration but extolled him for his amazing faith (Matt. viii. 10). The theme of one of the Parables is the careful consideration of the prospects of success that is necessary before a king decides to go to war (Luke xiv. 31 ff.). When He counsels the disciple who has not got a sword to be sure and buy one, even if he has to part with his cloak in order to do so, He is not thinking of war, but of the risk of open violence to which the disciple will be exposed and the consequent need of the means of self defence (Luke xxii. 36)—and that is hardly a policy of absolute non-resistance! He even reckons with the possibility that a hostile army may be the organ of judgment (Luke xix. 41 ff.). When He points out that 'all who

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take the sword will perish by the sword' (Matt. xxvi. 52), He implies that He regards it as just that all who wantonly resort to violent methods should perish in the same way.

It goes without saying, however, that all participation in purely aggressive warfare is as inconsistent with Christian discipleship as highway robbery. All frivolous justification of war must be uncompromisingly condemned, and only those explanations can be accepted which show that one has been forced into a position which burdens the conscience and that the solution of a serious conflict has to be striven for. An Australian airman made a revealing remark to a Canadian Chaplain in the spring of 1945. When the horrible truth about the Nazi concentration camps came out, he exclaimed: 'I feel that I can now do my bombing *with a clearer conscience.*' All honour to him, that he felt that he could justify the horrible work he had to do at the bar of his own conscience only by the realisation that he was fighting an evil system which in the interests of humanity had to be destroyed and could be destroyed in no other way. The only moral justification there can ever be for war is the recognition that to refuse to draw the sword is to tolerate a far greater wrong, to betray thousands, and possibly millions, of human beings into the hands of tyranny and brutality, and to leave the wickedly disposed perfectly free to wreak their cruel will on the innocent. There are, alas! men of such a type that to appeal to their reason and goodwill and to plead with them for justice and fair play, is as futile as to ask mercy of tigers. It is that grim fact which sentimental idealists overlook with tragic results to mankind.

So, then, there are wrongs that have to be resisted, and all the changes for the better that history has witnessed have come in that way; for it was by active resistance that such things as gladiatorial combats, infanticide, slavery and child-labour were abolished. It is by the resistance of exploitation that the workers have secured better wages, better houses, better conditions of labour. It is by



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resistance that the world has—twice in this century—been saved from the fatal domination of a jack-booted militarism, which would have made brute force the sole arbiter of international affairs. But even when resistance is being offered, all vindictiveness can be eschewed. It is possible for a man to fight evil with the vision of truth and justice before his eyes, with malice towards none and with charity for all. The passion for revenge is the thing that Jesus seeks to destroy, root and branch. The futility of revenge has been made clear thousands of times in the history of men and of nations. All who, in social life, have ever met insult with insult, or wrong with wrong, know the senselessness of such a procedure—it just adds fuel to the fire that needs to be quenched. The tragedies of European history are due, to no small extent, to the tendency of nations to find no rest for their spirits until they are even with their adversaries, and have avenged defeat, whether that defeat was deserved or not. But Jesus condemns the spirit of revenge not just because of its senselessness and futility but because it is a wicked fiendish thing, a denial of brotherhood, a withholding of love, a sin against man and against God.

It is a law of the Kingdom of God that a man shall renounce vengeance and be ready to show mercy and kindness even to one who has done him the direst wrong, and in such magnanimity virtue reaches its climax and wins its crown. This, again, is not just 'urgent advice', for so long as a man is vindictive he is outside the Kingdom of God, which opens its doors only to the magnanimous.

(6). Another difficult question is raised by the command to love our enemies. *'You have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies (ἐχθρούς)'*. The first part of the quotation is from Leviticus xix. 18; the second part is an inference from Old Testament practice, and from the fact that Jews recognised the duty of kindness and compassion only when they were dealing with fellow-Jews or proselytes. 'For the most High hateth sinners and will

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repay vengeance to the ungodly. . . . Give to the good, help not the sinner' (Ecclus. xii. 6-7). In classical Greek the word *ἐχθροί* referred to personal enemies, i.e., people who for some reason are at enmity with one; while for enemies in the political and military sense, the word *πολέμιοι* was used. Is Jesus, then, referring to private or public enemies? He is thinking, as the context shows, primarily of the former; of people hostile on personal grounds. There is no reference to war conditions. The parallel passage in Luke makes it abundantly clear that the private enemy is in view: 'Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully abuse you.' So long as we think of the word 'love' in terms of tender affection, what is required of us here is impossible. But there is no reference to the 'love' that unites husband and wife (*ἔρως*) or the 'love' that binds parent and child (*στοργή*) or the 'love' that links friend to friend (*φιλία*). The reference is to the 'love' that recognises and considers and cares (as explained above). This love is not just a fitful and flickering emotion, 'but the energy of a steadfast will bent on creating fellowship.' We may find it quite impossible to cherish tenderly affectionate feelings towards one who is personally hostile to us, but we can resolve that by the grace of God we will do the just and generous thing by him and not meet his enmity with our own. And after all, as Jesus suggests, it is easy to be patient with one who does not irritate us, courteous to one who is courteous to us, kindly and gracious to one who is similarly disposed. Anybody can be thus far virtuous—even knaves and vagabonds. The real test comes when we have to deal with those who are in some way contrary and hostile to us. Can we be patient with those who irritate us, courteous to the rude, gracious to the ungracious? Only so, says Jesus, can we prove ourselves the children of that God Who is all-inclusive in His goodwill, and makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends His rain on the just and the unjust.

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But though the primary reference is to personal enmity, the wider reference is not excluded. The Jews were very particularist, and inclined to be hostile to all not of their own nation. This was not just a Jewish characteristic. Even Plato congratulated the Athenians on their pure hatred of foreign nature, and Aristotle taught the Greeks that they should regard themselves as the leaders of the world and should make use of barbarians (that is, foreigners) as plants and animals.<sup>1</sup> (Compare the Latin word 'hostis', which means 'foreigner' and 'enemy'). It was this exclusiveness which Jesus condemned. The favourite Jewish contrast between Jew and Gentile was here swept aside, and Jesus declared for the spirit of philanthropy. (The profound significance of this aspect of His teaching for our modern world is considered in the next chapter.)

In time of war, the question of loving one's enemies raises for many an almost insuperable difficulty. Half the difficulty vanishes when the real significance of the word 'love' is recognised. But the other half remains. Peabody meets it thus: "Love your enemies", says the teaching of Jesus, but one cannot love one's enemies by the wholesale, when gathered in a hostile army, a threatening nation, a corrupt party, a despotic Church. He can, however, detach the individual whom he must love from the movement which he must oppose, and be merciful to the wounded soldier, or generous to the hostile politician, or tolerant to the believer in an irrational creed.'<sup>2</sup> Dr. Fosdick tells a remarkable story of an Armenian nurse who, in the first world war, had to tend in hospital a badly injured Turkish soldier whom she recognised as the man who had killed her brother and had tried to kill her too. She was severely tempted to neglect him and let him die, but she resolved, in the light of the teaching of Jesus, to do her duty by him, and she nursed him back to health!<sup>3</sup> Would the

<sup>1</sup> Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* pp. 129 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Twelve Tests of Character*, p. 166.

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people who decry the idea of loving one's enemies suggest that all the German airmen who were brought down in air-raids on this country ought to have been murdered in cold blood? Is it not rather one of the greatest triumphs of Christian civilisation that enemy wounded normally receive the same care as the wounded of one's own country, and that enemy prisoners are justly and humanely treated? Does not the very possibility of the healing of the grievous wounds of war depend on our humane treatment of the masses of the German people now 'committed to our judgment and our mercy', so far as that is compatible with generous assistance to the nations Germany has wronged, with the demand for the just punishment of war-criminals, with all possible reparation for the damage so wantonly done, and with the safeguarding of mankind from another outbreak of the *furor Teutonicus*? And was not mercy to a vanquished foe one of the noblest features of mediaeval chivalry?

It is one of the central principles of the Kingdom of God that a man should be ready to show generosity to an enemy. So here again we are dealing not with 'urgent advice' but with an essential and indispensable condition of admittance into the Kingdom of God.

(7). *'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is there will your heart be also'* (Matt vi. 19 ff., compare Luke xii. 33 f.). What is meant by 'treasure in heaven'? The usual answer is righteousness, though Luke's rendering suggests that the reference is to money given in mercy to the poor, the idea being that he who saves money has treasure on earth, while he who gives freely to relieve the poor has treasure in heaven, with the additional advantage that his heart is there too—a characteristically Lucan touch. Probably the best commentary is the last sentence of the Parable of the Rich Fool: 'So is he that layeth up treasure for

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himself, and is not rich towards God.' What Jesus has in mind here is the tendency of men to find in material goods the most precious thing in life, and to relegate moral and spiritual values to a very secondary and subordinate position. The literalism that sees here a condemnation of reasonable thrift or of the banking system (the banking system of His own day Jesus accepted as a perfectly normal and necessary institution, Matt. xxv. 27), is absurd. Jesus is here protesting against the mania which so often drives men to set their whole heart on the amassing of material wealth as the *summum bonum* of life, and as Burke said: 'Whenever we concentrate the mind on one sole object, that object and life itself must go together.' The slave of Mammon cannot be at the same time the slave of God, for the one service excludes the other. The over-valuation of material things that led so often to the neglect of moral and spiritual values was, in the sight of Jesus, one of the most fatal of all the illusions of men. He Himself set no store by material wealth, and recoiled from the moral and spiritual injury that invariably results from the ruthless pursuit of gain. G. F. Watts' famous picture of 'Mammon' is a vivid portrayal of the utterly brutalising effects upon the soul of complete servitude to the amassing of worldly goods. Even when the question of 'wealth' does not enter into the picture at all, people are all too prone to be more concerned about the means of life than about life itself, about making life possible than about making life worth living—forgetful that mere physical existence is not worth what it costs unless life can also be made worth living, an end which can be achieved only as God-given moral and spiritual ideals are embraced and exalted to the supreme position. What He proposes here is a re-valuation of values. A man's true worth lies not in the abundance of the things that he possesses, but in the quality of his personality, in his moral character, and in the service he renders to his fellows. The most precious thing in life, the Pearl of Great Price—more to be coveted than aught else, is the Kingdom of

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God; and no man can enter the Kingdom unless he sees in his moral and spiritual goods the most valuable of all his possessions.

(8). Closely akin to the preceding imperative is the saying: '*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*' (Matt. vi. 33). Here the ethical (apart from the religious) problem is the fact that Jesus stresses the moral aspects of life as the supreme aspects—to which the economic aspects are subordinate. The question of livelihood is secondary to that of Life. A man's primary concern should be to do what is right and not just to gain a livelihood. Men are prone to put economic considerations first and to sacrifice moral principles for the sake of their daily bread. The plea 'I must live' is often advanced as an excuse for unethical behaviour. When business men argue that 'business is business' they usually mean that it is exempt from ethical control. It is said that one of the factors behind prostitution is the economic factor—that some girls, who find it difficult to make both ends meet, sell their bodies as an easy way out. This word of Jesus is a call to moral heroism, to the high resolve to do that which is right in the sight of God whether it brings gain or loss, prosperity or adversity. Whatever happens, moral claims must be met first. True, Jesus insists that they who seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness will have their temporal needs supplied (and it is undeniable that a great deal of individual economic distress is due to folly or wrong doing of one sort or another)—but that does not mean that they will necessarily enjoy material prosperity; there is no suggestion that the Christian code is a 'good business proposition'. No one ever sought the Kingdom of God more heartily than Jesus, and yet He had to confess that while the foxes had their holes and the birds their roosting places, He Himself had not where to lay His head, and eventually He died on a cross. It cannot, therefore, be affirmed that devotion to righteousness is, for every individual, a sure way to material suc-

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cess. Nevertheless it is true that social prosperity can be achieved only by social righteousness and international prosperity by international righteousness. The foundations of general economic well-being are ethical and spiritual. It is only as business and industry are based on ethical considerations, that is, only as men labour not just for private profit, but for the common good, that economic security can be achieved for all. And unless the nations of the world base their dealings with one another on ethical principles, mutual goodwill and concern for the well-being of mankind, there is nothing but economic distress and misery and war and ruin in store for all mankind. If men everywhere sought first God's Kingdom and righteousness—instead of seeking, as they so often do, first to gratify their own greed—economic want would vanish from the earth.

Men who are in the Kingdom put the will of God and the service of man first.

### (c) EXAMPLES OF THE PRINCIPLES AT WORK

The Old Testament frequently gives concrete examples of the kind of behaviour which the Law requires, for example, 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.' (Exod. xxiii. 4 f.) Similarly, after stating one of the general principles of the Kingdom, Jesus occasionally gave concrete examples of its operation. That is notably the case in connection with His teaching on the renunciation of all desire for retaliation. To make His meaning quite clear, He gives four vivid illustrations of the kind of behaviour He has in mind. He means them quite literally and thinks of them as being literally followed. Nevertheless they are *not rules* for all occasions, but simply *lightning sketches of a non-vindictive spirit in*

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*actual operation*—it is on non-vindictiveness that the stress is laid; and it is only from that point of view that they can be interpreted aright. When their Oriental character is forgotten and they are taken completely out of their context and made prosaic general rules for all circumstances they can easily be shown to be quixotic.

(1). '*Whoever smites thee on the right cheek, turn to him also the other*' (Matt. v. 39). Could non-vindictiveness be more vividly described than here? It is as though Jesus said: 'Don't be vindictive; for example, if a man forgets himself and insults you, don't reply with a counter insult—it is better to suffer a double insult than to stoop to your adversary's level.' There is one famous case on record of a miner, Richard Weaver, a converted boxer, who followed this teaching literally and allowed a fellow-miner to strike him six times—and the final issue of the incident was such that Weaver had abundant cause to be profoundly thankful for his literal obedience.<sup>1</sup> In the ancient world such restraint was exceedingly rare, but it did occur. Plutarch tells us that Lycurgus was once struck in the face with a stick by a quick tempered young man, Alcander, and thus lost an eye. Alcander was later handed over to him for punishment. 'Lycurgus . . . taking him with him to his house neither did nor said anything severely to him, but . . . bade Alcander to wait upon him at table. The young man . . . did as he was commanded; and being thus admitted to live with Lycurgus, he had an opportunity to observe in him, besides his gentleness and calmness of temper, an extraordinary sobriety and an indefatigable industry, and so, from an enemy, became one of his most zealous admirers, and told his friends and relations that Lycurgus was . . . the one mild and gentle character of the world.' Certain it is that the man who, after being insulted, cannot rest until he has returned the insult with interest, has a good deal of venom in his unregenerate nature.

<sup>1</sup> William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 282.



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It is absurd to infer that it is a Christian duty to tolerate hooligans and bullies, for in such cases other questions than vindictiveness have to be considered—Society needs protection from them, and in their own best interests drastic treatment is necessary—but any counter-action can and should be free from the taint of vindictiveness. In the interests of law and order a man may rightly react vigorously to a wrong. One of our statesmen some time ago sued a man for libel, because his good name as a minister of the Crown had been besmirched; but he showed his complete freedom from vindictiveness by claiming no damages—he was satisfied with the vindication of his honour in a law court. Another living statesman, who was once assaulted (for political reasons) by a man with a horse-whip, showed his freedom from vindictiveness by appearing in the police court when his assailant was prosecuted and pleading with the magistrates for a mild sentence. Such men illustrate perfectly the inner meaning of this precept of Jesus.

(2). *'And if somebody wishes to go to law with thee and take away thy tunic, let him have thy cloak also'* (Matt. v. 40). If this is the original form of the saying, it is not to be exalted into a 'rule' forbidding legal proceedings of any kind and in any circumstances. It certainly illustrates a completely non-vindictive spirit. It is undeniable that there are occasions when it is better to waive a right than by rigid insistence on one's rights to lead to a display of re-crimination and anger and vindictive passion; though, of course, a policy of appeasement has its limits, especially when people refuse to be appeased, and as soon as one claim is satisfied advance another. The rendering in Luke vi. 29: *'From him that taketh away thy cloak, withhold not thy tunic also'*, is rather different, here there is no question of legal proceedings; the idea is that if a man forcibly seizes your coat, you should offer him your waistcoat too! Here again, there is no 'rule' for universal application, but a vivid, startling, dramatic, half-humorous portrayal of abso-

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lute non-vindictiveness. Jesus saw in vindictiveness, in any circumstances, the very devil at work, and found it so base and cruel and soul-destroying a passion that He sought its utter annihilation. Nobody before Him, or independently of Him, has so emphatically demanded the suppression of the passion for revenge and the drive to retaliation. Justice itself is corrupted to the very core the moment it becomes vindictive, and a vindictive judge (for example, Jeffreys) degrades his high office.

(3). *'Whoever compels thee to go one mile with him, go with him two'* (Matt. v. 41). Compulsory service was occasionally required by the Roman authorities, and Jews had from time to time to act as guides or messengers. The most familiar example is that of Simon of Cyrene, who happened to be on his way into Jerusalem as Jesus was being led out of the city for crucifixion, and was compelled to carry His cross. Service of this kind, as the badge of a conquered race, naturally gave rise to much bitterness. A Jew required to act as a guide to a Roman soldier would hardly conceal his feelings. The two men would be at daggers drawn as they walked together, and would part hating each other more than ever. Jesus recognised that this service was inevitable and that resistance of Rome was hopeless, suicidal, folly. So He urged the acceptance of the inevitable with good grace—a procedure which, instead of adding fuel to the fires of hatred, would promote good feeling. As there was no power on earth that could at that time have set the Jews free from Roman domination, such 'collaboration' was not in any way a disservice to the Jewish nation, but was the truest patriotism in that it would help to improve the relations between Roman and Jew. Such an illustration as this was uniquely adapted to our Lord's purpose—to make clear what He meant by the complete elimination of the desire for revenge, and would sound startling in Jewish ears, for it amounted to this: 'The next time a Roman compels you to walk a mile with him as guide, when you have done your mile, instead of darting angry glances

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at him, ask him pleasantly if you can be of any further service! Oust vindictive feeling from your heart.'

(4). '*Give to him who asks thee, and from him who wishes to borrow of thee do not turn away*' (Matt. v. 42). It is imperative to consider these words in the light of their context. The theme is the renunciation of the desire to retaliate, to be even with one's adversary. Thus what is here enjoined is not indiscriminate charity but that a man should not refuse to give or lend that he may pay off some old score on the one who makes the request. The question at issue is not giving and lending in the modern sense of these terms. We must keep in mind the antique oriental background—there was no poor law, no relief for distress apart from the mercy and compassion of private persons. Jesus is thinking of temporary need—such as the need of bread or a cup of cold water, and what He urges is that a man should not refuse to minister to a hungry and thirsty fellow-creature in order to requite some injury suffered at his hands. Similarly, if a man is asked to lend a cloak to one who would otherwise have to sleep out in the cold insufficiently clad, he is not to seize the opportunity of retaliating for some offence previously committed and reject the request for assistance.

So we have here no general 'rule' that is to be invariably applied. If we gave to everybody who asked us and lent to everybody who wished to borrow, we should soon be bankrupt. Nor is there any real encouragement here for indiscriminate giving—if our refusal to give is due to a desire to satisfy vengeful feelings, it is wrong; but if it is due to a determination not to encourage impostors to live as idle parasites on the community, it is right. It is of interest to note that the *Didache* (circa A.D. 100) shortly after quoting these words of Jesus, adds: 'But about this it hath also been said: Let thine alms sweat into thy hands, until thou know to whom thou art to give.' All charity-workers in our great cities are satisfied that indiscriminate giving is a great social

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evil, and insist that relief should be given only when genuine distress has been proved—the very thing which Jesus assumes.

That there is a paradoxical element in all these imperatives is clear. Jesus is pointing out that what God requires is the very opposite of what men normally teach and practise. His ethical ideas here—as everywhere—have a religious background. He assumes faith in God, communion with God, a passion for the Kingdom of God, and thus His viewpoint is foreign to materialists and humanists who, in consequence, dismiss His precepts as 'impossible', or 'exaggerated' or 'highfalutin'. It is true that Jesus is not enacting laws for the statute book of any State, but holding up ideals for individuals to embrace. Even men of the world surely recognise that vindictiveness is a grave evil that introduces into human life the atmosphere of hell, and that a generous spirit is the sign and seal of nobility of soul. When Garibaldi was engaged in guerilla warfare in South America he was taken prisoner by a man named Millan, who tortured him by suspending him for several hours by the wrists from a beam in the ceiling; but when the fortunes of war changed and Millan was a prisoner in Garibaldi's hands, he 'retaliated' by ordering him to be set free on the spot!<sup>1</sup> Most men would acclaim such a deed as that. Similarly most people would agree with Lactantius, who, after quoting from Cicero's *De officiis* that he is a good man who benefits all he can and harms no one unless he is provoked by injury, continues: 'Oh how he spoiled a simple and true sentiment by the addition of two words! For what need was there of adding "unless provoked by injury", that he might hang vice on a good man like a most disgraceful tail and might represent him as devoid of patience, the greatest of all virtues? He said a good man would inflict injury if he were provoked. But from the very circumstance that he inflicts injury he must necessarily lose the name of good man. For it is no less the part of a bad man to return an injury

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *Defence of the Roman Republic*, p. 35.

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than to inflict it.<sup>1</sup> Or think of Wordsworth's beautiful tribute to a French patriot during the Revolution, Beaupuy:

### *Injuries*

*Made him more gracious, and his nature then  
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,  
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,  
When foot hath crushed them.*<sup>2</sup>

The results of vindictiveness are so baleful, and the results of generosity and magnanimity are so highly beneficial, that Jesus' teaching on the subject is to be regarded, not as visionary idealism but as sober realism, or, as an American might say, 'the darndest common sense.' When men dismiss it as impracticable, they would be well advised to ask themselves whether, after all, policies of revenge are really very effective in practice—for about all they do, apart from giving a perverse satisfaction to ungenerous natures, is to sow dragon's teeth. At this crisis in the history of civilisation, man will neglect the teaching of Jesus at his peril. That there are wrongs that have to be redressed, that there are criminals who have to be punished, that what reparation can be made to countries ravaged and exploited must be made, that safeguards of peace must be secured, is all perfectly clear. But sheer vindictiveness must be eschewed. The choice for mankind is between the teaching of Jesus and suicide.

### (d) SPECIAL COUNSELS AND WARNINGS

(1). The purest example of a moral imperative which can fairly be regarded as what Anderson Scott calls 'urgent advice' is the word addressed to the Rich Ruler: '*Sell what thou hast and give to the poor*' (Mark x. 21). In Matthew's account this remark is pre-

<sup>1</sup> McGiffert, *History of Christian Thought*, ii, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> 'Prelude', Book IX.

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ceded by '*If thou wouldst be perfect*', and Luke reports Jesus as saying '*Sell all that thou hast*'. This moral imperative is of a totally different kind from all those previously considered. It deals, not with an indispensable condition of discipleship or with one of the central principles of the Kingdom of God, but with the course most advisable for a particular rich man to pursue. Jesus is giving urgent advice to an individual, prescribing a special medicine for a special case. It is no 'toning down' of the ethical teaching of Jesus, no 'accommodation' of it to our present situation, to insist on that. It is clear that Jesus did not expect everybody who proposed to become a disciple to sell all they had—Martha and Mary, for example, were apparently fairly well-to-do, but they were never urged to sell their possessions and give the proceeds to charity. The Rich Ruler was urged to part with his great possessions because Jesus was seeking to emancipate him from bondage to his riches, from his selfishness and self-centredness. The man was profoundly interested in his own moral and spiritual good and wished to make sure of his eternal salvation. But he thought he could love God without loving his fellows, without self-sacrifice, self-renunciation and the service of mankind. This aspect of the case is made clearer in the account of the incident given in the Gospel of the Hebrews, which runs thus: 'One of the rich said to him: Master, what good thing am I to do that I may live? He said to him: Man, obey the law and the prophets. He replied, I have obeyed them. He said to him: Go, sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor and come, follow me. But the rich man began to scratch his head and was displeased. And the Lord said to him: Why do you say I have obeyed the law and the prophets? For it is written in the law: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, and behold many of thy brothers, sons of Abraham, are clad in filth, dying of hunger, and thy house is full of many goods and absolutely nothing goes out of it to them. And turning to Simon, his disciple, who was sitting near him, he said: Simon, son of

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Jonas, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' Even if the details thus supplied are largely apocryphal, they are not very wide of the mark.

The incident serves as a salutary warning that even a man's moral and spiritual culture can become a purely selfish affair, in that he is anxious about his own moral and spiritual well-being, but not concerned about others. Such a man is a kind of hermit—vainly seeking 'self-realisation' in isolation from society. However excellent such a man may become in certain respects, his development will inevitably be lop-sided. It is impossible to achieve self-realisation without interaction with society. True, if a man neglects self-culture, he will not be able to do much for society, for if we are not much ourselves we cannot do much for others. But the fact remains that without the service of society there can be no complete self-culture, for almost all the virtues are social in character, and depend for their development and exercise on contacts with other men. Kant held that we should seek perfection for ourselves and the happiness of others. The Rich Ruler sought perfection for himself—and stopped there. Jesus sought—apparently in vain—to transform him into a man who sought perfection for himself and both happiness and perfection for others.

(2). One of the most beautiful of the ethical exhortations of Jesus occurs in the passage in which He pours scorn on ostentatious almsgiving. '*But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*' (Matt. vi. 3). By this remarkable figure of speech Jesus urges secrecy in beneficence. Passion for publicity, love of the limelight, desire for credit and applause are to be repudiated and satisfaction is to be found in good works themselves completely independently of their being known and admired. It can hardly be denied that such a spirit is one of the choicest ethical graces, as one or two examples will make clear. In the fourteenth century there arose an association of devout

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people (Tauler was one of their leaders), who called themselves 'Friends of God', and it is said it was their practice 'to conceal their names when they wrote, lest a desire for fame should mingle with their endeavours to be useful.'<sup>1</sup> Or take Justin McCarthy's tribute to Macaulay: 'He was remarkably generous and charitable, even to strangers; his hand was always open; but he gave so unostentatiously that it was not until after his death half his kindly deeds became known.'<sup>2</sup>

(3). In the exhortation, '*Judge not, that ye be not judged*' (Matt. vii. 1), Jesus issues a warning against a censorious habit of mind. That it is right and necessary to judge in the light of clear knowledge is, of course, conceded, as Bengel's comment makes clear: 'Judge not without knowledge, love, and necessity. Nevertheless (as verse 6 shows) a dog must be regarded as a dog, and a pig as a pig.' It is not easy-going tolerance of evil that is here commended, but the recognition that to judge another is a difficult task, liable to error. No man can be sure that he completely understands the workings of another's mind, or accurately estimates another's motives, or fully understands another's circumstances.

*Not ours to know the more or less,  
The will's defect, the blood's excess,  
The earthly humours that oppress.*

Our own faults and prejudices warp our judgment of others. To the mean man everybody is mean; to the selfish, all are selfish; to the impure, all are impure. Thus when a man gives an unfavourable portrait of another, he often gives an exact likeness of himself. Many harsh judgments are due to lack of imagination—and those who are condemned could often fairly hurl at their judges the retort of Job: 'I also could speak as you do; if my soul were in your soul's stead, I could shake my head at you and join words

<sup>1</sup> *Theologia Germanica*, p. lii.

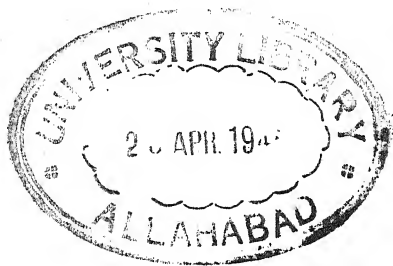
<sup>2</sup> *History of our own Times*, III, p. 89.



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together against you.' A deeper self-knowledge would often temper our judgments of those who fall badly with mercy and charity. Goethe once said that he never read the story of a crime without realising that the seeds of the self-same thing were in himself. Censoriousness is a wicked thing, a characteristic of the villain Iago, as his exclamation: 'I am nothing, if not critical', shows. One of the soundest bits of advice on this theme is contained in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: 'Blame not before thou hast examined; understand first, and then rebuke' (xi. 7).

Such, then, are the chief moral imperatives of Jesus. Together they constitute an ethical ideal for man such as has never been equalled elsewhere, let alone surpassed; an ideal as suited to the deepest needs of man and society to-day as at the beginning of our era.



## CHAPTER V

### JESUS AND SOCIETY

When we turn to the teaching of Jesus for light and guidance in regard to the pressing public problems of the modern world, our first impression is one of disappointment that on these matters He has so little to say. His ethical teaching deals mainly with the private individual, his personal life and his personal relations with his neighbour and his adversary; about the ethics of Society and the State and international relations Jesus scarcely speaks at all. He is not legislating for, or even thinking of, the future course of civilisation. His primary concern is not with this world, which He regards with comparative indifference as something rapidly approaching its end, but with the Kingdom of God and winning men for that. He recognises that man has duties to perform in this world, duties which He regards as tests of obedience to God, and He extols fidelity, diligence and perseverance in the performance of these mundane tasks. But He lays down no social programme. He expounds no theory of the relations between the individual and the State, and puts forward no scheme for the federation of the world. The great public issues which agitate the minds of men to-day, He does not even envisage. Yet He does lay bare principles of supreme and paramount importance, upon which the weal of mankind, in every age, depends.

#### (a) THE FAMILY

Jesus showed warm appreciation of the family. His tenderness towards little children is one of the most conspicuous and beauti-

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ful things in the Gospel records. (Mark ix. 32-37; x. 13-16; Matt. xviii. 1-8.) He repudiated with unmitigated scorn the subterfuge by which, even in the name of religion, a son was allowed to escape his obligations to his indigent parents—for a son had merely to declare that the funds needed for their support were *to be regarded* as 'dedicated', in order to absolve himself from all filial responsibility! (Mark vii. 9-13). The profoundest of the parables describes the welcome-home given by a father to a wayward son. He used family relationships to illustrate His religious and ethical teaching—His highest name for God was 'Father', and he insisted that His disciples should deal with one another as 'brothers' (Matt. xxiii. 8).

Yet in other ways He *seems* to have depreciated the family. He never established a family of His own, but apparently regarded Himself as a 'eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God'. He broke off relations with His mother, brothers and sisters, because they sought to put an end to His public activity. They may have felt that the course He was pursuing was highly dangerous and likely to bring Him into political peril, or their motive may have been less respectable. All that we *know* is that they regarded His public ministry as sheer madness and wanted forcibly to restrain Him. (Mark iii. 21, 31-35.) Jesus' public repudiation of His relatives was quite emphatic. He declared that He regarded as brother and sister and mother only those who were in earnest about the Kingdom of God, and whose supreme concern was to do the will of God. This incident, which Mark fortunately has recorded, is sufficient of itself to demolish all the Mariolatry of the Roman Church, for it shows that so far from being 'the Queen of Heaven', Mary stood in opposition to her Son, and was, for a time at least, disowned by Him. This news-flash of Mark's Gospel makes it clear that in all probability bitter personal experiences lay behind the words: 'For I have come to set a man at variance with his father, and a daughter at variance with her mother, and a

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daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law, yea, the members of a man's own household will be his enemies' (Matt. x. 35-36). Here, of course, Jesus was referring not to the *purpose* of His teaching, but to its *inevitable result* in many cases. Outright devotion to the cause of the Kingdom of God on the part of one member of a family has often led to the acutest family tension and strife. Even to-day, many an Indian knows that if he fully embraced the Christian faith he would be disowned by his family. St. Luke has probably preserved the original form of Jesus' demand that the interests of the Kingdom of God must come before family affection. 'If any man comes to me, and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, aye, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' (xiv. 26.) St. Matthew gives the same saying in a milder form: 'He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.' (x. 37.) As *interpretation*, this milder form is correct enough, but it undoubtedly tones down the utterly uncompromising and almost harsh nature of the actual words of Jesus, though, no doubt, He used the word 'hate' in the Hebrew sense of 'love less'. (cf. Gen. xxix. 30-31: 'Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah . . . and the Lord saw that Leah was hated.') In a vivid and dramatic way, Jesus declared that unless a man loves the Kingdom of God more than he loves his kith and kin, even his nearest and dearest, he cannot be a disciple. Hardly less startling was His word to the young man who wished to go home and bury his father before undertaking the duties of discipleship: 'Leave the dead to bury their dead, but go thou and proclaim the Kingdom of God' (Luke ix. 60; cf. Matt. viii. 22). It looks as though a man's reasonable request for leave on compassionate grounds, that he might attend his father's funeral, was bluntly rejected by Jesus. This short narrative is difficult to interpret aright because of its brevity. We are not in possession of all the facts. Was the father actually dead or did the man wish to go

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home and stay there until his father died? In the former case, it may have been the chastening influence of sorrow that prompted him to become a disciple, and Jesus suspected that when the grief was gone it would take all desire for discipleship with it—that high resolves made under the influence of bereavement prove evanescent is a common feature of human experience. In the latter case, Jesus may have detected that the man was merely making an excuse and wished to postpone becoming a disciple. If that was really so, the man's mind was divided and he was in a state similar to that of Augustine, when he exclaimed: 'Presently, O presently; let me be a little while. But my "presently, presently" had no present, and the little while proved a long while. . . . Give me chastity and self-control, but not just yet.'<sup>1</sup> In either case, therefore, the man needed drastic treatment, and he certainly got it in the brusque reminder that the claims of the Kingdom of God brooked no delay, not even for the sake of family considerations.

In view of all this evidence, it is hardly surprising that in China and Japan people are said to be shocked by Christ's disparagement of family ties. And it is not only in China and Japan that that happens! True as it is that some of our Lord's language on this subject is hyperbolical, and is not to be taken literally, yet there is no gainsaying the fact that He issued a stern challenge. He insisted that family devotion could easily be exaggerated, and that it went too far when it led to the suppression of the claims of the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, the claims of God were far more sacred than the claims of the family. Yet after all, Jesus demanded no more for the Kingdom of God than is freely conceded by everybody to the State in time of war. The soldier cannot refuse the call to the colours because he has a widowed mother or a young wife with an infant at her breast. Hard as it all is, it is generally recognised that, in times of emergency, the very tenderest ties have to be

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, VIII, v and vii.

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severed. The soldier recognises that he has to put his duty to his country even before his duty to father and mother or wife and child. Such is precisely the point of view of Jesus in regard to the service of the Kingdom of God. That the tendency to put the claims of God first often results in a domestic crisis of one kind or another has often been made clear in the course of Christian history. How often were people on the way to martyrdom urged to save their lives by renouncing Christ, for the sake of an aged father or a helpless babe! When John Bunyan had to choose between ceasing to preach and going to prison, he made his heroic choice only at tremendous cost: 'The parting with my Wife and poor Children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling the Flesh from my Bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great Mercies, but also because I should have often brought to mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor Family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, *especially my poor blind Child*, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides. O the thoughts of the hardships I thought my Blind-one might go under, would break my Heart to pieces . . . O, I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his House upon the Head of his Wife and Children; yet, thought I, *I must do it, I must do it.*'<sup>1</sup> There was no small crisis in the home of Florence Nightingale when, contrary to her parents' wishes and passionate entreaties, she decided to obey her 'call' to leave comfort and luxury behind, and embark on a life of strenuous service. 'We are ducks', Mrs. Nightingale said with tears in her eyes, 'who have hatched a wild swan.'<sup>2</sup> But how mean a life Florence Nightingale would have led had she not repudiated parental counsel and 'followed the gleam'; and what a serious loss it would have been to the world had she not put the service of God and humanity even before filial devotion. Such incidents as

<sup>1</sup> *Grace Abounding*, Oxford Edition, p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, p. 120.

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these make clear the inwardness of the plea of Jesus that there is something far more sacred than family life and love.

The fact is that family affection becomes a subtle snare whenever it is exalted into a good for which everything else must be sacrificed. There are things that ought *not* to be done, even for the sake of the family; and there are things that *ought* to be done even in the teeth of the fiercest family opposition. To exalt the family to the supreme place, by regarding as right whatever is advantageous to it, is as fatal both to religion and ethics as that deification of the State by which the State becomes a law to itself and the advantage of the State the criterion of right and wrong. That the members of a family should be united in mutual love and loyalty is desirable enough, but when that results in mere clannishness and indifference to the well-being of the rest of society, it becomes a contemptible thing. Actual contact with people whose attitude is summed up in the words: 'God bless me and my wife; my son John and his wife; us four, no more, Amen', will open the eyes of any reasonable man to the fact that Jesus' criticism of family love was not a whit too drastic—that it erred on the side of moderation rather than of excess. Mother-love itself is not necessarily a noble passion. It sometimes scarcely rises above the animal level and is comparable to a cat's love of her kittens or a sow's devotion to her litter. There are mothers whose love of their children is simply an extended form of selfishness, for they love their children as parts of themselves, love them in a possessive and exclusive way which shuts their hearts to other children, and makes them almost fanatical in their desire to promote the welfare of just *their* children, whatever happens to other people's children. Such mother-love is as disagreeable a phenomenon as it is unethical. As Jesus would say, a mother's love does not mean very much even to her own children unless she loves God *more* than she loves her children, for then her love will lift them to a high ethical plane, and she will have regard to the well-being of children

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other than her own. A father's devotion to his family is excessive, for example, when he makes money in questionable ways in order to gratify their extravagant tastes. Often enough professional men charge excessive fees which are a cruel hardship to their patients or their clients, and some business men are similarly ruthless, simply because they want the wherewithal to indulge their families. Marriage often results in selfishness *à deux*, and young couples become so absorbed in their own personal affairs that they abandon all forms of public service and lose all public spirit. The home thus becomes the grave of every noble impulse and every high endeavour. Altruism is snuffed out like a candle and the family's private concerns become the central and the sole live interest. Thus excessive family love can produce not only the gravest personal ethical defects but also complete indifference to human service. Our Lord's 'attack' on the family was, therefore, quite justifiable.

The modern Communist's 'attack' on the family is, in some respects, of the same kind. He thinks of the family as an economic unit, an instrument of the capitalist class, consolidated by the desire to transmit property. What the Communist has chiefly in mind is the social cruelty to which men so often resort in order to promote the economic interests of their own families.<sup>1</sup> The industrial revolution frequently produced a type of man who cared not what havoc he wrought in other people's families provided only that he won security, comfort, and luxury for his own. The history of this country during the last century and a half could supply scores of illustrations which prove to the hilt the soundness and the justice of Christ's contention that to love one's family is by no means enough.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Laski rightly observes: 'I suspect, indeed, that it is not accident that both the teaching of Jesus and the doctrine of the Communist Manifesto are at one in their emphasis upon the danger of the family . . . the family becomes the nurse of avarice and narrowness, a hindrance, rather than a help, to fraternity in the commonwealth.' (*Faith, Reason and Civilisation*, p. 97.)



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### (b) DIVORCE

High as Jesus rates the claims of parents upon children, He rates those of marriage still higher. 'But from the beginning, when God created the world, male and female, He created them: therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and the pair shall be one flesh' (Mark x. 6-7). It was precisely because He took so high a view of marriage, that He reacted so strongly against the Rabbinical scriptural interpretation which permitted the very licence which scripture was written to forbid. The basic passage here is Deuteronomy xxiv. 1: 'When a man taketh a wife and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.' According to the school of Shammai, a man could divorce his wife only if he had found something shameful (that is, unchaste) in her. On the other hand, the school of Hillel maintained that if a wife burnt her husband's food, that was a shameful thing which could justify divorce. Rabbi Akiba (died c. A.D. 135) allowed a man to divorce his wife if he had found another woman more beautiful, and he justified this on the ground that, according to the Law, it was permissible for a man to divorce his wife if she found no favour in his eyes.<sup>1</sup> The frivolous divorces which were so common amongst the Jews gave husbands a tyrannical power over their wives, and involved women in cruelty and shocking injustice. 'How could the family be either sacred or secure when its continuance was thus evidently dependent upon the caprice of the husband?'<sup>2</sup> It is only against this background that the teaching of Jesus about divorce can be fully understood.

When the Pharisees pointed out that, in contrast to the teaching of Jesus, the Mosaic Law permitted divorce (Deuteronomy xxiv.

<sup>1</sup> S.B. Vol. I, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* p. 210.

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1), He replied that the Mosaic Law was simply a concession to human weakness, a compromise between the principle that the claims of God can and should be fulfilled by men and the recognition that in actual practice some men could not rise to the height of the Divine ideal of marriage. Jesus appealed to the original stricter ordinance of God, and claimed that when God instituted marriage, He intended the union to be indissoluble, and that men could and would realise this Divine ideal if only they overcame the hardness of their hearts. Jesus regarded divorce as an outrage; the idea of marriage as a purely temporary arrangement, easily dissoluble, was foreign to His thought; and the Jewish practice of divorce, often enough on the flimsiest grounds, appeared in His eyes as a scandal. The free use of Moses' concession with the permission of the Scribes and Pharisees He deemed to be yet further evidence that no man could enter the Kingdom of God unless his righteousness exceeded theirs. On this question of divorce Jesus took the highest possible ground, and insisted that a marriage joined by God should never be dissolved. He definitely proscribed divorce for all who ever hope to enter the Kingdom of God. In St. Matthew's two accounts of our Lord's teaching on this point, there occurs, in both cases, the saving clause that a wife may be divorced if she has been guilty of adultery (v. 32; xix. 9). But this exception is certainly not original, for St. Paul, the first to quote the teaching of Jesus on the subject, knows nothing of it. 'A wife is not to separate from her husband, and if she has actually separated, let her remain unmarried, or let her be reconciled to her husband, and a husband is not to put away his wife' (1 Cor. vii. 11). There is further evidence in the Gospels that the 'saving clause' of St. Matthew is not original, for Jesus seems to have recognised that there were cases where it was desirable for husband and wife to separate, but even then He held that the marriage was still in force: 'Every one who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and a man who marries a divorced

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woman commits adultery' (Luke xvi. 18). So the 'saving clause' twice introduced into St. Matthew's Gospel is to be dismissed as a later addition to the text, occasioned by the difficulty of carrying out in practice the uncompromising teaching of Jesus. (On this point, however, New Testament scholars are by no means agreed, and some, for example, Anderson Scott, even go so far as to say that whether the 'saving clause' is original or not, it is probably true to our Lord's thought.) It would appear, then, that Jesus casts His vote against divorce in all circumstances—such seems to be the only possible conclusion in the light of the evidence available. That such teaching is horrible, 'over-strained morality' (Renan), in the eyes of the ultra-modern is neither here nor there—our concern is to get at the actual thought of Christ. The average father would probably disown a wayward son and lock the door against him, but Jesus held that an ideal father would welcome a repentant wastrel and receive him again into the home circle; for a prodigal son is still *a son*. Similarly the average husband would disown and divorce an adulterous wife and regard himself as free to marry again, but Jesus held that an ideal husband would still regard a prodigal wife as his *wife*. Was He thinking of Hosea, who was faithful to a faithless wife? Hosea had had children born in his house that were not his own. But when his wife, Gomer, deserted by her paramour, had sold herself into slavery to get her daily bread, Hosea went and bought her out of slavery, took her under his roof and cared for her. 'So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and an homer of barley and an half homer of barley' (Hos. iii. 2). Surely no one can deny that there was something superb, even sublime, in Hosea's behaviour. That a man should be required by law to behave in that fashion is impossible and absurd, for spontaneity is of the very essence of such an action, and only the noblest type of man can ever rise to such heights. It is to the ideal course that Jesus summoned men, and what He urged was that they should never think in terms of

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divorce at all.<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott seems to go rather too far when he says: 'The pronouncement on divorce is notable as the one exception to the rule that Jesus did not lay down laws but only guiding principles.'<sup>2</sup> Jesus is hardly laying down a law, even here, but is appealing to a Divine ideal and urging men to live up to that. He is telling men not what they *must* do (and 'must' is the language of law), but what they *ought* to do (and 'ought' is the language of ideals). In a prophetic, and not a legalistic, spirit He is calling on men to consider not how they can most easily cancel their marriage vows, but rather how they can make marriage the indissoluble thing that God intended it to be. He re-echoes in stronger form the plea of the prophet Malachi: '... the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. . . . Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith the Lord, the God of Israel' (ii. 14-16). Here there is no legal quibbling. The prophet goes straight to the heart of the moral issue involved. Similarly Jesus meets rabbinical legal hair-splitting as to the possible grounds of divorce with the uncompromising declaration that divorce is hateful to Him, and that men would be better employed trying to make marriage a success than seeking ways and means for its dissolution. His viewpoint is that the man who seeks to order his life according to the will of God will regard marriage as an indissoluble union.

At the same time, it must be clearly recognised that Jesus was not framing any law for the statute book of the State. His teaching about the indissolubility of marriage, like other hard sayings of His, is fully applicable only to those who are citizens of the King-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hastings Rashdall, *Conscience and Christ*, p. 104: 'In a society living up to Christ's principle there would be no divorce for adultery because there would be no adultery.'

<sup>2</sup> *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 98.

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dom of God, who spontaneously accept God's will as the law of their lives, and who consequently adopt the divine idea of marriage. In this imperfect and sinful world where the human weaknesses and 'hardness of heart' which led Moses to make legal provision for divorce still persist, and where so many have not the least desire or intention to take the divine view of marriage or of any other life-issue, the ideal view of marriage cannot be made compulsory. A view of marriage voluntarily adopted *within* the Kingdom of God cannot be enforced by legal sanctions *outside*. This was doubtless the view of Jesus Himself, for He was *not* legislating. What moved Him to speak as He did was His horror of the lax views of marriage entertained by many of His contemporaries, His sympathy with women who had in consequence been cruelly wronged, His recognition that divorce *ought* not to be at all, and that if men made marriage what God originally intended, it *would* not be at all. For any Church or State absolutely to forbid divorce to all and sundry on the strength of the teaching of Jesus—which is fully applicable only to citizens of the Kingdom of God—would be to turn idealism into legalism, and would ultimately defeat the purpose of Jesus by worsening a situation which He sought to improve. When the State puts obstacles in the way of divorce, it is at least conceding that the dissolution of marriage should not be an easy affair and that was, *in part*, the mind of Christ on the matter.

On this question, avowed disciples of Christ, however, are—or should be—in a very different position from the general public. They, at any rate, should lay the teaching of Jesus to heart. Even if the State allows divorce in the case of insanity, would a genuine disciple of Christ abandon the wife of his youth because, in her middle or later years, she had lost her reason? Would he so interpret his vow 'for better for worse'? Even in the case of a wife's adultery, it sometimes happens, alas! that the main hindrance to forgiveness and restoration is not so much the wife's offence as

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the fact that the husband has already set his heart on another alliance. Again, when two Christian people enter into marriage, they should think of the union as union for life, for that is the ideal view of marriage. The more Christian people refuse to regard marriage as a purely temporary and casual contract that may easily be broken by either party, the more they will contribute to the health and stability of both family and social life.

Even those who own no allegiance to the Christian faith, and who claim that they are 'modern', 'enlightened', 'emancipated', would do well to pause and enquire whether their new-found wisdom is, after all, superior to the wisdom of Christ. Do easy ideas about marriage really make for the happiness and well-being of mankind? The experiment has been tried in Russia and has proved a failure. In the early days of the Russian revolution people were often, literally, married to-day and divorced to-morrow. Stable marriage was regarded with contempt. Extreme sexual promiscuity was fashionable and general, and was hailed as the sign and the seal of emancipation from old-fashioned and antiquated ideas. But there has been a marked reaction. Communist leaders now extol the advantages of permanent marital relations. Excessive loose living is not only frowned on, but is a recognised ground of expulsion from the Communist party or from the Union of Communist Youth.<sup>1</sup> This new trend in Russian social life is surely a tribute to the teaching of Jesus that when two people marry they should conceive of marriage as an indissoluble union. One thing, at any rate, is certain—a lofty view of marriage is indispensable to the stability and well-being of the family and of society.

<sup>1</sup> See Chamberlin's *Russia's Iron Age*, quoted by Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* p. 310.

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### (c) THE STATE

Jesus had very little to say on political questions but what He did say has far-reaching implications. He gave no direct advice to the civil, judicial or military authorities as to how they should discharge the duties of their office, or to private citizens as to their duties to the State. But this comparative indifference to the State does not justify Renan's idea that Jesus was an anarchist, for He displayed no mildness towards criminals, He took civil justice for granted, and recognised public order and civil authority in their own province. He was certainly no political revolutionary. Klausner complains that Jesus did not think it 'worth while to fight against the political oppression of Rome, for the political freedom of the nation. What does it matter if you *do* pay tribute to Caesar, if only you are at peace with the Lord your God!'<sup>1</sup> According to St. John, when enthusiastic supporters proposed to make Him King, He swiftly withdrew into solitude (vi. 15). He had no sympathy with the political Zealots of His day whose policy it was to set the Jews free from Roman dominion by force. Even when, at the Triumphal Entry, He publicly hinted at His Messiahship, He rode into the city on an ass—thus clearly indicating that He was on a mission, not of war, but of peace; and that the Messianic King was no warrior-rival of Rome, but gentle and lowly. That Jesus had not dabbled in politics is clear from the account of His trial, for the Jewish leaders did not find it easy to convince Pontius Pilate that He was politically dangerous. They naturally stressed the fact that Jesus had claimed to be the 'Messiah', but they invested the term with political implications which played no part in His conception of Messiahship.

Jesus was duly submissive to the Jewish authorities. He paid the Temple Tax (with a mild protest), as He said to Peter, 'in order that we may not shock them' (Matt. xvii. 27). By His cleansing of the Temple, He antagonised the High-priestly families who

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 373.

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drew their wealth partly from the extortionate trading that went on there, yet He was not challenging their *right* to control the Temple, but simply denouncing the *way* they did it, for they had turned the House of Prayer into a cave that sheltered a gang of thieves. He took the Sanhedrin for granted and did not challenge its competence to arraign Him. Nor did He demur when Caiaphas put Him on oath (Matt. xxvi. 63).

His dealings with Herod Antipas were of the slightest. He thought very little of him and said so plainly, calling him a 'fox'. (Luke xiii. 32). He refused to answer any of Herod's questions when He was sent to him for trial. (Luke xxiii. 8-12).

He acknowledged the political supremacy of Rome, and appears to have been of the opinion that His fellow-countrymen should do the same, for the simple reason that it was not practical politics for them to try to break the Roman power. On the question of the compulsory service (as guides, couriers, etc.) demanded of the Jews from time to time by the Roman authorities, He advised His contemporaries to accept the inevitable with good grace, and instead of resenting the demand to offer to go the second mile. (Matt. v. 41). He handled the dangerous question of the payment of tribute to Caesar with great skill: 'Restore to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Mark xii. 17). It is sometimes urged that as an answer to the question 'Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar? or is it not? Are we to pay? or are we not to pay?' this reply was entirely non-committal, and, indeed, an evasion of the real issue. But a trap had been set for Him, and He must at all costs avoid being caught. That His reply was neither a categorical affirmative nor a categorical negative is obvious enough, and the reason why He could not give such a reply is not far to seek. He was living in a period of acute and perilous political tension, and the issue raised by the Pharisees was as dangerous as a lighted match near a powder-magazine. Had He replied that it was a perfectly right and proper thing for the Jews,



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as a conquered race, to pay tribute to their military masters, He would have been regarded as a reactionary, as an enemy of His country, and as hostile to His own people. Had he stated plainly that the Jews should refuse the payment of tribute, He would have been idolised by many of His fellow-countrymen as an anti-Roman agitator and would have been brought into collision with the Roman authorities—for they could hardly have ignored such an open summons to revolt. Thus a plain yes or no would have been a lightning flash that would have laid His work in ruins, for He would either have antagonised those whom He most wished to influence or He would have been forced into the political arena to fight an unequal contest with the power of Rome. Thus a categorical reply was plainly impossible.

Yet in substance, if not in form, the answer was definite enough. By demanding to see a denarius stamped with Caesar's image and superscription, He reminded His hearers that they were actually using Caesar's coinage. He thus implied that, since the Jews were enjoying the benefits of orderly government, they owed certain duties to their benefactor—and this is a vitally important principle, for all who live in a country and enjoy the protection of its laws should recognise their obligations and act accordingly. So Jesus enjoins the Jews to pay back to Caesar what they owe him, and adds 'pay back to God what is God's.' He thus makes it clear that God and the State are not identical, nor are they Powers standing side by side but inwardly united. He is insisting on their separateness—God and Caesar rule different territories. The coin with Caesar's image is an earthly thing that belongs to Caesar. The soul of man, made in the divine image, is a spiritual thing and belongs to God. As Tertullian put it: 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's—his image on the coin; give to God what is God's—His image in man, yourself.'<sup>1</sup> The implication is that man's supreme loyalty is to God, and so if duty to God and duty to the State are

<sup>1</sup> *de Idol.* p. 15.

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in conflict, it is the duty to God that has the paramount claim. Here again we encounter a principle of supreme importance. It always spells tragedy when men deify the State, and, acknowledging no higher authority, make the State a law to itself. Nazi 'philosophy', for example, exalts the German State above God, and regards it as the supreme end of every German, not to glorify God, but to serve the German State by contributing to the increase of its military and political power and prestige—with the resultant theory that whatever is to the advantage of the German State is right, even if it be contrary to all law, human and divine; it calls on men to render to Caesar everything they have, and the idea that there is a law of God superior to that of the State is scornfully rejected. Thus, in the light of the modern situation, we can see the profound significance of this word of Jesus. He insists that while the rightful claims of Caesar must be duly met, it must never be overlooked that the higher loyalty is to God. Peter evidently learned the lesson well, as his declaration 'We must obey God rather than men' (Acts v. 29), clearly shows.

The attitude of Jesus to the State is more definitely revealed elsewhere. He was aware of a profound contrast between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. He had a poor opinion of the political rulers of the world of His day. As the Temptation narrative implies, He regarded the kingdoms of this world as in Satan's gift: 'All these things (that is, the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them) will I give to thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me' (Matt. iv. 9). In the political power of His day He saw something Satanic, namely, the ruthless exercise of raw power, and the notion that by the exercise of such power men became 'great'. His own ideas about greatness found crystal clear expression in the remarks with which He endeavoured to cool the tempers of the disciples who had been roused to anger by the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee: 'You know that

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they who aspire<sup>1</sup> to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not to be so among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant, and whosoever would be first among you shall be the slave of all' (Mark x. 42-44). It is clear from these words that Jesus thought of the power of Rome as *arbitrary and oppressive*, as 'lording it' over people, and as the mere assertion of authority. So it was. Rome regarded might as right. Her empire was gained and maintained by the sword. For her, the way to greatness lay through conquest and dominion, through the assertion of an authority that men resisted at their peril. Her aim was to be mistress of the world, not for the world's benefit, but for the greater glory of Rome. It was precisely that idea of greatness that Jesus so decisively rejected—power for power's sake appeared in His eyes as a Satanic thing. For Him, the way to greatness, to real eminence, and true dominion, lay through service.

Tolstoi's denunciation of the State as mere ruthless Power was doubtless based partly on this aspect of the teaching of Jesus. He was only too familiar with the cruel arbitrariness and oppressiveness of the old Czarist régime, 'a tyranny such as the world has never known, silent as darkness, rigid as ice, insensible as bronze, decked with an outer amiability and glittering with the cold brilliancy of snow—a slavery without compensation or relief.'<sup>2</sup> Tolstoi felt that such power was Satanic, so that he reacted to the power of the Russian State as Jesus did to that of Rome. This ancient idea that the very essence of the State is to be found in ruthless power is one that dies hard. It was on this principle that Bismarck based his foreign policy, and it was this idea that Treitschke sought, with not a little success, to drive home to the young manhood of Germany. Such men, without any sense of shame

<sup>1</sup> I have adopted T. W. Manson's excellent suggestion for the translation of οἱ δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν. See his *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Amiel, *Journal*, p. 55.

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(for they gloried in the fact), declared that the only ethical principle which was valid for the guidance of a State's activity was its own preservation and the increase of its political and military power and prestige. But is it not the outstanding tragedy of modern times that Germany has sought mere power, sought to 'lord it' over the world, to 'exercise authority' over it, and to make everybody tremble when she rattled her sword in its scabbard, instead of seeking to *serve* the world with her music, philosophy, literature, education, medicine and natural science? She could have gained through service a real cultural 'world-empire', while the kind of barbaric empire she has sought at the cost of rivers of human blood and tears she will never achieve. The champions of 'real politics' and 'power politics' laugh to scorn the idea of dominion through service, but it looks as though Jesus was right after all, for the pseudo-greatness associated with raw power for the sake of power is a Satanic thing, while the real greatness associated with service is Divine.

It is because this idea of the State as mere power dies so hard, that even professing Christian people sometimes maintain, as Naumann did, that the Christian ethic does not and cannot rule our whole life, but that as citizens of a particular State we must have another ethic as well. Christian ethics, Naumann affirmed, can govern only our purely private life. For our public life as citizens we have to accommodate ourselves to the needs of the State, and the State is engaged in a struggle for existence with other States, and in that struggle the decisive factor is not love but power, and often ruthless power. He held that, as a private person, the Christian adopts the Christian ethic, but as a citizen he adopts the State's power-ethic; and that questions concerned with national and economic life lie entirely outside the Christian scheme. 'I vote and agitate for the German navy not because I am a Christian, but because I am a citizen of the German State, and because I have given up the idea of expecting to see fundamental

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international questions settled in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>1</sup> He maintained that with the affairs of the State, the Christian gospel has nothing to do; that Jews and Pagans can manage these matters as efficiently as Christians, because decisions on State-issues are reached through the exercise of reason and not by means of revelation, since they are non-ethical questions and therefore outside the province of Christian ethics. If such is the case, the Christian has to serve two masters, Christ and the State; and to have two ethical codes, the 'service' code that Christ extolled, and the 'power' code which He condemned as Satanic. True as it is that international relations have all too often been based on the law of the jungle and to a large extent are so based still, yet it is a mere counsel of despair to assume that such a condition of affairs is inevitable, that States can never co-operate for the common good of mankind, but are of necessity rivals, more or less at daggers drawn, watching for an opportunity to increase their own power at the expense of their neighbours, as thugs watch for the chance to commit a crime. This is a nightmare view of mankind and can lead only to ceaseless war and (since war now-a-days is 'total' and the scientific means of destruction are growing apace), eventually to the extinction of civilisation. Men of the Naumann type accept the wrestling of nations with one another as part of the world-order, dismiss the very idea of peace on earth as a foolish dream, and deride international harmony as an ideal impossible of attainment. But it is surely for the Christian to aspire after the moralising of international relations, the abolition of Satanic 'power'-politics, and the substitution of 'service'-politics aiming at the common weal of the entire human race. The notion that whether the man who directs the foreign policy of a State is a Christian or a Pagan makes no difference is true only if the Christian statesman refuses to allow State affairs to be influenced by any Christian considerations, and leads a double life, Christian in his private and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Briefe über Religion* by Feine, op. cit. p. 170.

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personal concerns but frankly un-Christian in public matters; otherwise it is manifestly absurd. It obviously makes a vast difference not only to the policy of the State concerned but to the fortunes of mankind as a whole, if the man at the helm is a Hitler who conceives it to be the supreme duty of the State to increase its power by any and every means, or a Roosevelt whose conviction it is that a State should pursue a 'good neighbour' policy, that promotes international harmony and goodwill and all-round prosperity. It is a complete fallacy to assume that there is anything in the nature of a State as such that prevents it from being a 'good neighbour', if its citizens and leaders are resolved that it shall be a 'good neighbour' and not a potential menace to the liberty or well-being of other States. After all, the American authors of the 'good neighbour'-State idea are not sentimental idealists but hard-headed men in close touch with the realities of the world situation, and the happy relations between the United States of America and Canada indicate that the idea is practical politics. At any rate, what Jesus condemned in contemporary Statecraft was the worship of power for the sake of power—sheer national egoism, and what He advocated was the idea that true greatness comes through service. That means, so far as a modern State is concerned, that national greatness is achieved not by ruthless efforts to dominate mankind, but by a good-will that seeks to serve mankind. The cynics who dismiss such a policy as political moonshine are thereby doing all in their power to bring about such a catastrophe that they could fairly be accused of hatred of the human race.

So long, therefore, as the State's external policy is the promotion of good-neighbourly relations with other States, the reign of law, the support of public order and public right, and the maintenance of peace, the Christian can stand by the State of which he is a citizen, even in its exercise of power, without any renunciation of Christian ethical ideas and ideals. For instance, the Christian commander of a destroyer has no need to feel that he is departing

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from the Christian ethic because, as a representative of the power of the State, he is keeping the seas clear of pirates or suppressing the slave trade or resisting a disturber of the peace. Power so exercised is clearly not power for power's sake but power that seeks to serve the best interests of mankind.

Similar considerations apply to the State in its internal aspects. Tolstoi wished to abolish the State simply because his experience of the Czarist State led him to the conclusion that the State is merely an instrument for the cruel oppression of the people. But when, as in a democratic State, the laws are an expression of the will of the people and not arbitrarily imposed by a despotic authority, there is nothing contrary to the Christian ethic in the State's exercise of power to enforce them. The policeman in a democratic State is not the agent of oppression, but the friend and protector of all law-abiding citizens, and all the duties he is called upon to perform he can execute with a good Christian conscience, without the need of any double code, one for his private life and another for his official duties. Here, again, it is the true function of the State, not 'to lord it' or merely 'to exercise authority', but to serve the best interests of the people as a whole, and any power that is so exercised is power that serves.

The true Christian of to-day can no more adopt two systems of ethics, one (the Christian) for his private life, and the other (State-power ethics) for his life as a citizen than the Christian at the beginning of our era could worship Christ and Caesar. If, as Naumann assumes, Christianity has nothing to do with those activities which we undertake not because we are Christians but from some other cause, the greater part of life is put outside the sphere of Christian ethics. On that ground a man might, for example, argue: 'I am in business, not because I am a Christian, but because I have to earn my living, and so my conduct as a business man is quite uninfluenced by considerations of Christian ethics.' The obvious truth is that the Christian is in duty bound to

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apply Christian ethics to his conduct *as a whole*—as a private individual, as a family man, as a business man, as a citizen, and as a member of the world-community.

One other question calls for comment. The suspicion that patriotism is *not* a virtue is somewhat allayed by the attitude of Jesus, for there is surely a flash of patriotic passion in that bitter cry: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, slayer of the prophets and stoner of those sent to you, how often did I want to gather your children together as a mother-bird gathers her brood under her wings, yet you refused.' (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34.) But His patriotism was free from all particularism and national fanaticism. 'Jewish nationalism and all its expectations are ignored entirely. . . . In the thought of Jesus, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God and not the rule of the Jewish people.'<sup>1</sup> Klausner finds in the non-national character of the teaching of Jesus one of the main reasons for His rejection by the Jews: 'In the self-same moment he both annulled *Judaism* as the *life-force* of the Jewish nation, and also the nation itself as a nation. For a religion which possesses only a certain conception of God and a morality acceptable to *all* mankind, does not belong to any special nation, and, consciously or unconsciously, breaks down the barriers of nationality. This inevitably brought it to pass that his people, Israel, rejected him.'<sup>2</sup> The ethical teaching of Jesus is applicable to all men, and not merely to Jews. It is universalistic, not Jewish, and 'has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions.'<sup>3</sup> As Windisch says: 'The Torah, even in its purely ethical aspects, was regarded as having reference only to the Jewish people, for them only the promises and the commands were valid, thus the Torah was concerned with national life. This connection with the Jewish people Jesus ignored, and addressed

<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 390.

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. II, p. 8.



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his ethical demands to man as man.<sup>1</sup> There are many hints in the gospels that Jesus was strongly opposed to the fierce and narrow nationalism of many of His contemporaries. In His address at the Synagogue at Nazareth, He criticised the contempt of the Jews for their Syrian and Phoenician neighbours, by reminding them that there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, but that the only widow the prophet ever visited was a Phoenician; and that there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, but that the only leper the prophet ever cured was a Syrian. (Luke iv. 24 ff.) It was hardly surprising that after saying *that*, He was expelled from the town! There was the same ringing challenge in His commendation of the faith displayed by the Roman (?) centurion (that he was a Roman is doubtful, but he was certainly a non-Jew), as faith of a sort that He had never met in Israel. (Matt. viii. 5 ff.) In one of the greatest of His parables, with a sublime moral courage, He portrayed the hated Samaritan as a kinder and humaner man than either Jewish priest or Levite. (Luke x. 30 ff.) When a scribe wished Him narrowly to define the word 'neighbour' as 'fellow-Jew', He insisted that 'neighbour' meant any human being whom destiny placed in our path and gave us an opportunity to assist. In the Sermon on the Mount, He repudiated Jewish exclusiveness as an attitude unworthy of those whose proud boast it was that they were the children of God—a God Who is all-inclusive in His good-will. He spoke of people coming from the east and the west, from the north and the south to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, while 'sons of the Kingdom' (that is, Jews) were excluded and consigned to outer darkness. (Matt. viii. 11 f.; Luke xiii. 29 f.) Again, 'The Lord's Prayer presents the quintessence and perfection of Israelitish-Jewish petitionary prayer, but the national idea is completely eliminated.'<sup>2</sup> That Jesus loved His people is clear from the 'Jeru-

<sup>1</sup> *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Windisch, *op. cit.* p. 96.

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salem' passage already quoted, and from the fact that He devoted His healing and teaching ministry almost exclusively to their service, but He revealed again and again His sympathy for the whole family of God and addressed His message, not to any nation, but simply to Man. He stood for philanthropy, for the idea that above all nations is humanity, and above humanity is God.

It is, therefore, clear from the teaching of Jesus, that patriotism is a virtue only when it is associated with the love of mankind. It degenerates into a hideous vice when it breeds contempt for other nations and races. But love of one's country *is* a virtue, and no man does anything but deceive and delude himself if he imagines that he loves mankind and yet fails in his obligations to the group of human beings amongst whom his lot is cast. Nevertheless love of one's country degenerates into a coarse and cruel fraud when it shuts out all concern for members of other nations and races, and refuses to acknowledge their status as members of the one great family of God. One of the supreme needs of the present hour is men who love and loyally serve their native land and at the same time cherish an interest in the well-being of mankind; who combine a noble patriotism and a lively sense of the brotherhood of man. Such men can be produced only by religion. 'Religion from primitive times the protector of the stranger, the marketplace, the truce, is the forerunner of international law; because it alone can create the international spirit, the international obligation; it alone can permanently sustain and ensure that spirit.'<sup>1</sup> The truth of this assertion is confirmed by the fact that the League of Nations, established in 1919, found its only real support in the Christianised sections of European society. The ideal of international fellowship, which all true Christian people uphold, is commending itself more and more to reasonable men of goodwill everywhere, and if ever the abolition of war is achieved, it will be because the Christian ethic has made good its claim and has won

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 521.

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the allegiance of mankind. Other foundation of real and permanent peace, no man can lay.

### (d) THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

According to Karl Marx, the economic factor is the cardinal and decisive factor in history, and all men's ideas about law, politics, culture, religion, and philosophy are moulded and controlled by prevailing economic conditions. 'The practical ways in which men get their living are the basis of their ideas.' If this were generally true, which it is not, Christianity itself would have to be regarded as a mere epiphenomenon of the economic struggle. The fact is that the rise of Christianity was not in any way whatsoever conditioned by social strife. 'Christianity was not the product of a class struggle of any kind; it was not shaped, when it did arise, in order to fit into any such situation; indeed, at no point was it directly concerned with the social upheavals of the ancient world.'<sup>1</sup> Further, Christianity was not only not the product of any social struggle, it did not make the social problem the central issue. The reason for that is not, as is sometimes alleged, that the social problem, which is the major pre-occupation of our modern world, had not arisen in the time of Jesus, but was a comparatively late arrival on the world-stage, a product of the industrial revolution. There has been a social problem all through the ages, the problem of riches and poverty, of 'the haves' and 'the have-nots', of oppressors and oppressed, of exploiters and exploited. The *forms* of oppression and the *causes* of poverty vary from age to age, but the stubborn facts of oppression and poverty are to be found in all ages. 'The poor you have always with you' (Matt. xxvi. 11). So there *was* a social problem in Jesus' day—the gulf that yawned between the very rich and the very poor. The wealthy ruling classes amongst the Jews, (the High-priestly

<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 39.

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families and many of the Scribes and Pharisees), had no sympathy with the hard lot of the poor, and it is from that point of view, in part, that our Lord's drastic words about the rich and riches are to be understood.

His attacks upon the rich and His obvious sympathy with the poor are doubtless responsible for the fact that some have found in the Gospel, a social message and nothing more. Such people have maintained that Jesus was simply a social reformer, 'le bon sansculotte', 'the perfect communist', out for the relief of all who languished in deep distress; His social programme being equality for all men and emancipation from economic want. (At the beginning of the present century there was a marked tendency even in many of the Churches to reduce Christianity simply and solely to a social message.) Others have gone to the very opposite extreme, and maintained that Jesus had no direct interest in the social problem at all, and that His message was purely and exclusively religious. In other respects, they suggest that He was a 'conservative', and regarded men's social and economic status as God-appointed—the point of view expressed in the well-known lines (which, at one time, were complacently sung by Christian congregations):

*The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate.*

The truth is with neither party. 'The programme of Jesus . . . is not in the first instance a plan of social reform, but a call for religious revival.'<sup>1</sup> The communistic experiment of the Early Church, whether it was compulsory (as Acts ii. 44 implies) or voluntary (as Acts iv. 32-v. 11 suggests), is no proof that Jesus was regarded by His first followers as the herald of a Utopian

<sup>1</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 297.

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communistic society, for the experiment was soon abandoned, because the Church realised that it was treading a false path which led away from the mind of the Master. On the other hand, it is idle to ignore the profound social implications of the ethical teaching of Jesus. To make His message an exclusively religious issue is to put the Gospel into a vacuum, to debase Christianity into a purely private love-affair between the human soul and God.

Jesus had no sympathy with the idea that the root problem of human life is purely an economic one, and that the true goal of human endeavour is a mere material paradise. He did not suppose that, when all men had enough to eat and drink, decent apparel to wear, a good house to live in, and ample leisure (desirable as these things are for everybody), the human problem would be solved and heaven on earth would have arrived. On the contrary, He believed that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God; or, to say the same thing in modern terminology, the satisfaction of man's economic needs is not sufficient for Life, divinely given ethical and religious ideals being indispensable. The modern socialist and communist usually concern themselves solely with the former problem. Jesus concerned Himself mainly with the latter—without ignoring the former. He was only too well aware that a material paradise cannot save man. He saw many around him already established in such a paradise, not only free from want but in the enjoyment of every comfort and luxury. Yet He thought very little of them, and was appalled at their crass selfishness (e.g., the Rich Ruler and Dives). It is only too true that the mere satisfaction of economic needs does not carry a man very far, a fact which modern social agitators almost invariably overlook. As the old adage says: 'You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' Herbert Spencer said the same thing more elegantly: 'There is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts.' Man is not a mere vulture flying through the Universe shrieking

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for something to eat. Food makes life, in the biological sense, possible, but only high moral and spiritual ideals can make life worth living, and thus transform life into Life.

Hence the main concern of Jesus was with the individual, his personal relation to God and the moral and spiritual quality of his life—and it is only as individuals are redeemed, that society can ever be redeemed; a good order of society can be brought into being not by mere economic means alone but by moral means as well, good men and women are essential and indispensable to it. It is a patent fact that people can have all their economic wants abundantly supplied and even then fail utterly to achieve either nobility of soul or personal felicity. It is no less obvious that a home can be replete with every conceivable comfort and luxury and even then prove a little hell on earth because of the personal character of the people who live in it. If the communist's economic ideal was universally realised and all want was banished from the earth, would human beings find complete satisfaction in being merely well housed and clothed and fed? Would not the happiness even of such a society be determined by its moral and spiritual tone? The human problem is a vastly greater thing than the mere economic problem, and indeed the economic problem itself has moral roots, for all the social wrongs of the ages have been directly caused by human selfishness at some point. Thus the ethical teaching of Jesus goes to the source and spring of the social problem—selfishness, lovelessness. Jesus did not lay down any concrete scheme of social reform, and, had He done so, it would have been applicable only to His own age and would, therefore, now be out of date. He dealt with eternal moral and spiritual principles rather than with policies and programmes. It is only as men have the right spirit and disposition that social problems can be solved at all, and it is with the question of the right spirit and disposition that Jesus dealt. True, we must beware of the fallacy that a right spirit alone is adequate to the solution of social prob-

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lems—if one has only a right spirit and no knowledge of first aid, one cannot even render much assistance to an injured man in the public street. The just organisation of social and industrial life requires a vast amount of technical knowledge and administrative genius; for instance, a right spirit alone could never have produced such a scheme as the Beveridge plan. What is even more true, however, is the fact that without a right spirit no solution of social problems ever will or ever can be found. A benevolent autocracy would establish a juster social order than a socialist society in which every man played selfishly for his own hand, or a communistic society in which manual workers ruled the roost and trampled on the rights and interests of other classes. The vitally important thing is not the system, be it autocratic, democratic, socialist, or communist, but the spirit in which it is worked. The social problem will last as long as selfishness lasts, whatever the political and economic changes that are introduced. Cabinets and Parliaments can do little to change the world; they can guide public opinion, but they cannot make people more unselfish, and that is the root of the matter. Hence Jesus lays the axe at the root of all social injustices—the selfishness of man. His concentration on that issue is no sign that He was indifferent to social injustice. Klausner misses the point altogether when, commenting on Jesus' refusal of a man's request that He should act as arbitrator between him and his brother about the division of an inheritance (Luke xii. 13-14), he says 'Jesus thus disregards justice generally, even when it is a case of natural civil interest, free of any ill motive; he thus ignores anything concerned with material civilisation: in this sense he does not belong to civilisation.'<sup>1</sup> What Jesus meant was that arbitration in such matters was not His province, and His subsequent remarks reveal that He was not interested in the transference of property from one selfish and covetous man to another man of the same type. To this day the demand for justice is often

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 375.

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a cloak that screens selfishness and covetousness, for one sometimes sees a remarkable change of front in factory-workers. When they are on the lower rungs of the industrial ladder their attitude to all who are better off than themselves is: What is thine is mine; but when they have been promoted to the higher rungs their passion for 'justice for the working man' cools, and their attitude to those worse off than themselves is: What is mine is my own. 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses.' Man is prone to overvalue material goods and to undervalue spiritual goods.

Though Jesus sponsored no 'plan' for the just organisation of Society, He nevertheless pointed out the supreme way to social renewal, by emphasising the social virtues which, if they were generally cultivated, would cause all injustices and cruelties to melt away like snow in summer sunshine. He stressed Compassion. The Gospels remind us on almost every page of the compassion Jesus Himself felt for all who were afflicted in mind, body, or estate. In His teaching He constantly appealed for compassion. He pronounced the merciful, that is, the compassionate, blessed. He extolled the Samaritan in the Parable because he had compassion. He pilloried Dives in another Parable because, though he fared sumptuously every day, he had no compassion for the wretched beggar at his gate. In the parable of the Last Judgment, He made compassion, free, spontaneous, uncalculating compassion, the ground of final acceptance or rejection. He called on men to be merciful like their Heavenly Father, and thus, for Him, in compassion, religion and ethics meet. It is clear that only as men feel compassion for their fellow-creatures who suffer social disabilities will they be disposed to make the necessary social changes. It is obvious that no truly compassionate man could ever have tolerated the horrors associated with the West African slave-trade, or the idea of making money out of the sour labour of little children, or an industrial system which enabled a millowner to live in



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luxury in a mansion while his workers lived below the poverty line in the meanest of hovels. No compassionate man can ever indulge in the snobbery which looks down with arrogant disdain on the poor and lowly. No compassionate society can look idly on while a gifted boy is denied, because of the poverty of his parents, the educational advantages which would enable him to develop his native talents. Without this deep fellow-feeling for the needs, the rights and the interests of others, there can be no real social amelioration.

Jesus urged obedience to the Golden Rule. Julian Huxley, in his *Romanes Lecture*, arbitrarily dismisses the Golden Rule as an impossible ideal—just as his grandfather did fifty years before. Though, doubtless, absolute loyalty to it is beyond our reach, yet surely it cannot reasonably be denied that we should at least seek to do to others as we would be done by. The Golden Rule would exercise an enormous moralising power if it were applied to all human relations and an earnest effort made to observe it.

Jesus sought to move men to recognise the nobility of service, and it is precisely that idea of service that needs to be introduced into the professions, into trade, industry and commerce. When Ruskin urged that men should put work first and the fee second, and affirmed that all who put the fee first and the work second were the devil's servants, he was simply stating in another form the teaching of Jesus about service. Is it completely Utopian to expect of a man that, whatever his vocation is, he should think of his daily work primarily as his service of the community, and secondarily as a means of livelihood? Is not all honest work, be it that of the surgeon or teacher or industrial magnate or workman or miner good service? Should not every man adopt the slogan of the Rotarians (who are, in the main, keen business men), 'Service before Self'? Is not the end of all good business the satisfaction of human needs and wants? Is it not the degradation of any man's work when it is regarded purely as a means of the maxi-

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mum private gain? Only the application of this idea of service can save any man from degenerating into a beast of prey and make him first and foremost a servant of his fellows.

It is often alleged that business life is a non-moral, diamond-cut-diamond process, from start to finish, and that ethical and humane considerations neither do nor can play any part in it. That is surely an extreme and lop-sided view of the matter. The truth seems rather to be that the very foundations of trade and commerce are laid in truth, honour, fidelity, loyalty—ethical principles. Is not a reputation for reliability, honesty, and fair-dealing (ethical qualities of the highest order), one of the greatest assets of any business-house? When a firm applies to some public man for a written statement as to the character of some applicant for a post, does it want an assurance that the prospective employee is an excellent liar, shifty, deceitful, dishonest and unscrupulous—or precisely the reverse? Even the crassest 'man of the world' will admit that, at any rate as a rule, honesty is the best policy. The notion that ethical considerations have no part to play in business and industry, can be dismissed as a baseless contradiction of the plain facts of the case. Again, true as it is that there is, of necessity, a big difference between business and philanthropy, for unless business yields profits it automatically comes to a full stop, yet humane considerations are not excluded from business life. There are, no doubt, brutally callous employers whose one idea is to screw the absolute maximum out of their employees, and to whom humane considerations are foreign; yet there are thoroughly humane employers who are genuinely concerned about the welfare of their workpeople. A working man once complained bitterly to me that the principals of a certain industrial firm in a midland city were utterly heartless, and regarded the workers as mere tools, mere things. Yet when he had the misfortune to contract smallpox, that heartless (!) firm paid his wages to his wife all the time he was in hospital, and, when he had recovered, wrote him

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a kindly letter informing him that he was to take a fortnight's holiday on full pay. That is simply one example of scores that might be adduced to prove that humane considerations can and do play a part in business life. It would be a great gain if the idea that business is necessarily, by its very nature, a non-ethical and brutal process, could be banished from the minds of men. If that obstacle were removed, the way would be opened for the ethical teaching of Jesus to play a far larger part in the actual work-a-day world.

It is sometimes objected that Jesus has nothing to say about the dominant interests of the modern man, namely, the progress of civilisation, art, science, commerce, industry, agriculture, etc. One might as reasonably complain that while Jesus told us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, He gave no hints about the most efficient way of raising food from the soil or about spinning or weaving. Jesus is obviously not concerned with the technical questions that every man has to face in his particular calling, He deals rather with *the* problem that confronts *every man*, namely, the question of good character and right conduct. The statesman will learn nothing about statecraft from the New Testament, but, if he embraces the ethics of Jesus, he will become a noble statesman who seeks to promote the highest interests of his country and of mankind. The man of science can obviously learn nothing about science from the Gospel, but, if he adopts the Christian ethic, he will see to it that, as far as in him lies, science is not prostituted to ignoble uses and rendered a curse to mankind, but made (as Louis Pasteur sought to make it), the servant and benefactor of humanity. Similarly the doctor, the nurse, the teacher, the industrial magnate, the tradesman, the factory worker can learn nothing from the New Testament about the technical side of their work, yet Jesus has a real message for them all. Under the influence of His ethic the doctor adds kindness and human sympathy to his scientific proficiency; the teacher acquires a lively

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interest in the well-being of his pupils; the man in business of any kind seeks to make that business a real public service and a blessing to all who are engaged in it; the workman is inspired to take a pride in the conscientious performance of his tasks, and to regard his daily labour as his contribution to the common weal. So it is idle to assert that the Christian ethic has no bearing on the dominant practical activities of our times, for no man can play the part he ought to play in any sphere of the active life of the world unless he seeks, in the discharge of his duties and in his contacts with his fellows, to apply those sublime principles which are for ever enshrined in the ethical teaching of Christ.

To sum up, apart from the love of God and love of man, which Jesus declared to be the very basis of wholesome human life, there is no possibility of any worth-while social millenium. Only as men respond to the demand for the renunciation of that inordinate love of self which is the source and spring of all the greed and selfishness which bedevil human relations, is there any real hope of a bright social future for mankind. And it is only as men love God that they are likely to rise to the heights of such self-renunciation.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VALIDITY OF THE ETHICS OF JESUS

**W**e must now consider some of the chief objections which have been raised against the ethical teaching of Jesus.

#### (a) THE ALLEGED ASCETICISM OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

It is sometimes objected that the Ethic of Jesus is not applicable to the ordinary man playing his normal part in the work-a-day world, and that it places all the good things of this life along with obvious vices, in the category of 'the world and the flesh'. In support of this contention, appeal is made to the world-renouncing and self-denying aspects of Christian Ethics, and it is suggested that it is impossible for anyone to be a real Christian unless he turns away from the world, its interests, its possessions, its pleasures and its politics, and gives himself up solely to the private quest of holiness of life.

It is undeniable, of course, that asceticism (*ἀσκησις*, practice, training) has played a prominent part in the history of the Christian Church, and is by no means a negligible factor in the life of the Church to-day. Already in the Second Century there were people who called themselves Encratites (*ἐγκράτεια*, self-control), and who held that the Christian must abstain from marriage, from meat and wine, and must renounce all private possessions, on the ground that only so could he bear 'the whole yoke of the Lord'. One of the most prominent of the Encratites was Marcion, who even made abstinence from marriage a condition of Church-membership. His preference for Luke's Gospel (the only Gospel which he acknowledged), was possibly partly due to the fact that

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it contained a word of Jesus which *seemed* to support so extreme a position, for while Mark reports Jesus as saying: 'When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven' (xii. 25), Luke reports the same saying in a different form, 'The children of this world marry and are given in marriage, but those who have been deemed worthy to attain that world and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage' (xx. 34-5). Celibacy came to be regarded almost as the climax and the crown of Christian virtue, and as an essential element of Christian Ethics—the soul was deemed the bride of Christ and had to be kept pure and spotless from all other love. The licentiousness of the times provoked this reaction on the part of some Christian people; it strengthened what ascetic tendencies there were in Christianity, and associated them with ascetic tendencies which were not properly Christian at all. Thus the pendulum swung to the other extreme. Eusebius expresses the same viewpoint in his *Apodeixis*: 'Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to his Church. The one is above nature and common human living. It admits not marriage, child-bearing, property, nor the possession of wealth, but, wholly and permanently separate from the customary life of men, devotes itself to the service of God alone, in its wealth of heavenly love. They who enter upon this course seem to die to the life of mortals, to bear with them nothing earthly but the body, and in mind and spirit to have passed to heaven. Like superior beings they gaze on human life and discharge the office of priests to God for the whole human race. . . . The other life, more humble and more human, permits men to unite in pure marriage, and to have children, to undertake office, to command soldiers who are fighting in a good cause; it allows them to attend to farming, trade, and other secular interests . . . a kind of secondary piety is attributed to them, giving such help as their lives require.'<sup>1</sup> It is clear that Eusebius regards

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dean Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, p. 125.

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the former as the only life in complete harmony with the true Christian ethical ideal. But such extreme asceticism belongs to a doctrine of the impurity of matter and the sinfulness of all sensuous experience; and this doctrine is of Greek and Oriental rather than of Christian origin, for there is no trace of it in the teaching of Jesus. 'But in the main, Christian asceticism rested, not on any philosophical belief consciously held, but on the desire to escape from a social environment at once corrupt and miserable, and to take refuge in prayer and meditation, undisturbed by the claims, the anxieties, and the temptations of the world.'<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church extols the ascetic ideal. It holds that the only person who can achieve Christian perfection is the one who flees from the world and embraces the ascetic life. Since it is clearly impossible for all Christians to do this, the Roman Church has introduced a double standard of Ethics (already noted in Eusebius), the higher for those who escape from the world and enter the monastic life; and the lower for those who remain in the world. The former is the ideal life for the Christian, the latter is just adequate. Borrowing University terminology, one may say that monks and nuns gain ethical 'honours', while other Christians gain a mere ethical 'pass'. The attitude of the Greek Church is the same. It maintains that the Christian in the highest sense of the term is the monk, who flees from the world and even from the Church that is in the world, practises silence and utter purity of life, gives himself up to contemplation on things eternal, and requires nothing of life but death which leads to the vision of God. Are we, then, bound to admit that the ethical teaching of Jesus is, at some points at least, quite impracticable for the ordinary man living in society? It would be a very serious limitation of Christian Ethics if such an admission simply *had* to be made. 'If an ideal is impracticable, it is no doubt better that it should be realised in some social medium, however artificial, than that it should be

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* p. 136.

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suspended in the thin air of religious sentiments and be realised only in subjective experience. The two-standard theory has this justification. But what are we to say of a moral principle which is such that it is not merely hard but impossible to carry it out under the conditions of life as we have to live it? Nor is it easy to venerate a standard which is not merely merciful to failure but actually *content* with the second best?<sup>1</sup>

Tolstoi reached the conclusion that thoroughgoing Christianity issues, of necessity, in asceticism, by a totally different route. The decisive factor in his case is to be found in contemporary social conditions in Russia. He saw one section of the community, including himself, living in extreme luxury, feeding on steak and sturgeon, while the rest lived in extreme poverty and want and squalor. He not unnaturally came to the conclusion that in such circumstances luxury was a crime. He was thus led to shed his luxuries one by one and progressively to simplify his life. Later on, he came to regard extensive possessions as evil in themselves. With remarkable honesty and candour and power of self-criticism—rare qualities among the privileged classes—he asked himself why he should possess so much while thousands around him possessed so little or nothing at all. Eventually, at the age of 82, he renounced all his possessions and sallied forth from home, but a few days later death put an end to his adventure. Once again the question arises as to whether there is anything in the teaching of Jesus which, if it is to be completely followed, requires such utter renunciation of the world.

There must be elements in the teaching of Jesus which appeared to many people not merely to justify but to require the ascetic life. They are not difficult to find. The story of the Rich Ruler, as reported by Matthew, represents Jesus as saying '*if thou wouldst be perfect* (τέλειος), sell what thou hast, etc.' This gloss seems rather to favour the double standard idea, in that it suggests that

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Barry, *The Relevance of Christianity*, p. 71.



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it is open to us to choose between what is adequate and what is perfect. But even apart from the Matthean gloss, the words of Jesus to the Rich Ruler have seemed to many to point in an ascetic direction. It was these words which, towards the end of the third century, led St. Antony to part with the wealth that he had inherited and give it to the poor and retreat from the world in order to devote his life to God. They appear, too, to have influenced St. Francis, when he also surrendered all his possessions and went out a beggar in the service of God and mankind. He exclaimed to his father: 'Up to this time I have called Pietro Bernardone father, but now I am the servant of God. Not only the money but everything that can be called his I will restore to my father, even the very clothes he has given me.' Then he rent off all his garments save one—a hair shirt. 'He went out half-naked in his hair-shirt into the winter woods, walking the frozen ground between the frosty trees; a man without a father. He was penniless, he was parentless, he was to all appearance without a trade or a plan or a hope in the world, and as he went under the frosty trees, he burst suddenly into song.'<sup>1</sup> That some men are called to devote their lives solely to religious service and, therefore, to make the necessary renunciation of worldly wealth and power and privilege, is a familiar fact. But that is a religious issue, and the world would be much poorer without such religious specialists. When, however, we think in terms of Christian Ethics only, it is clear that ethical standards for monks and abbots and bishops and clergy and ministers are pitched no higher than those for the Christian layman, for, so far as the moral life is concerned, all have taken the same vows to the same Lord. In His words to the Rich Ruler, Jesus was not legislating for all and sundry, but was simply appealing to a rich and very self-centred man to make a supreme expression of love for his fellow-creatures and to give signal proof of the sincerity of his expressed desire to achieve the highest virtue possible to

<sup>1</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi*, p. 62.

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him. Or take the famous 'eunuch' passage (Matt. xix. 12). Our Lord had just been speaking about divorce, and the disciples came to the conclusion that if the position was as Jesus defined it, the best plan was not to marry at all. Jesus replied: "There are eunuchs who were so born from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Let him who is able to practise it (*χωρεῖν*, literally 'make room for'), practise it." In this passage, after referring to those who were born incapable of fatherhood and those who have been sterilised, Jesus appeals to those who have *voluntarily renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of God*. It is easy to understand, in the light of this saying, that some Christians came to regard celibacy as the ideal thing for the Christian, but it is important to note that the celibacy which He commends is not celibacy for celibacy's sake, but celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God. To remain unmarried for the sake of freedom in the service of God and humanity is one thing, while to remain unmarried because of a suspicion that there is something unclean and impure in marriage is quite another. Of the latter idea there is no trace whatsoever in the teaching of Jesus, for He obviously regards marriage as natural and normal and indeed ordained of God. Any man, doctor or artist or author or scientist or clergyman or missionary, might decide that it was in the interests of his work to remain unencumbered by family cares and responsibilities. In such celibacy there is no trace of asceticism in the ordinary sense of the word—it might be termed 'non-ascetic celibacy', for it is celibacy for the work's sake. Again, while it is perfectly clear that our Lord broke with His own family and declared that His true relatives were not His kith and kin according to the flesh but those who were bent on doing the will of God (Mark iii. 19-21, 31-35), there is no suggestion that the Christian disciple is called upon to renounce family life and love in all circumstances. The

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reason of our Lord's breach with His family was that they were endeavouring to put a stop to His public ministry and were pronouncing it sheer madness on His part to carry on with it. Similarly the Christian disciple is called upon to resist and even to renounce his family *only* if they seek to interfere with what he solemnly believes to be the will of God. The ascetics have taken too literally the demand that the disciple must 'hate' father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters (Luke xiv. 26), and thus have found a virtue in renunciation for renunciation's sake. 'The scandals of Christian literalism are scattered thickly through Christian history.'<sup>1</sup> The ascetics should have recognised that our Lord is here merely insisting that loyalty to God is a duty superior even to loyalty to the family. Similarly the exhortation to deal drastically with the hand or foot or eye which becomes an occasion of stumbling is no ascetic demand for the maltreatment of the body and no justification of the self-inflicted tortures which were such a prominent feature of monastic life in the middle ages (and which, even now, are not unknown), but a vivid and dramatic demand for the sternest self-discipline, a demand that can be amply met in the ordinary ways of life, without any retreat into eremitism or monasticism. Once more, it is true that Jesus called upon men not to be over-anxious as to what they were to eat or drink or wear (Matt. vi. 25). But that was no plea for utter indifference to material goods. On the contrary, Jesus declared 'your heavenly Father knows that you are in need of all these things.' The whole purpose of His appeal was to check undue worry about mere ways and means at the expense of true life, and to foster confidence in the Divine Providence that feeds the birds or the air and clothes the flowers of the field; so that the man who finds asceticism here could get blood out of a stone.

The non-ascetic character of Jesus Himself is clear from His portrait in the Gospels. 'With the ascetic ideal he had no

<sup>1</sup> Hensley Henson, *Christian Morality*, p. 92.

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sympathy.<sup>1</sup> Had Jesus been ascetically inclined He would surely have shown some affinity with the contemporary Jewish monastic order, the Essenes; but (to mention one point only), their strict legalism—carried to such extremes that they would not even relieve nature on the Sabbath day—stands in startling contrast to the attitude of Jesus to ceremonial law. He had an open eye for the beauty of the world, for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. He shared freely life's simple joys. He cared for the bodies of men as well as for their souls. His interest in the ordinary work of the world was so keen that He based most of His parables on incidents in the life of the farmer, shepherd, trader, fisherman or housewife. He was criticised because He did not demand fasting of His disciples. He insisted that the strict observance of Sabbath Law must give place in the presence of human need. He championed the right of indigent parents to support from their sons. He protected the wife against the arbitrariness of the husband. He loved children, took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them and blessed them. He attended a wedding at Cana in Galilee. He entered so freely into social life that he was denounced as 'a gluttonous man and a wine bibber'. He gladly spent time in the home of Mary and Martha, who were apparently fairly well-to-do. He showed no antipathy to material things as such. His attitude to this world was rather that of the psalmist: 'The earth is the Lord's (not the devil's) and the fulness thereof' (Psalm xxiv. 1). In Him we see no gloomy, forbidding ascetic, but a very attractive and intensely human figure—a startling contrast to John the Baptist. 'He was neither an ascetic nor worldly in His manner of life. He acted merely in the way in which it was God's will that He should act. And the same apparently irreconcilable contradiction comes out again and again in His teaching.'<sup>2</sup>

The disciples certainly did not regard Jesus as an ascetic, nor

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, *The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels*, p. 81.

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did they suppose that His teaching favoured the ascetic life. They did not become ascetics themselves, nor did they advise anyone else to do so. They did not dismiss their wives, for St. Paul tells us that Peter and the brothers of the Lord took their wives with them on their missionary journeys (1 Cor. ix. 5). 'Marriage, a settled ministry, separated for its work and maintained by the Church, almsgiving—these imply a Christian society which has accepted subordination to the normal conditions of life in the world.'<sup>1</sup> When a man became a Christian, he was expected to carry on with his work in the world, just where he was, and play the Christian there.

It is no less important to note that there is no solution of the ethical problem in the ascetic life. The root of our trouble is not in our environment but in our *selves*, so that we cannot escape from it by retreat, for we have to take our *selves* with us wherever we go—as the monks discovered! Monasticism, no doubt, had its good side, for art, poetry, science and civilisation owe an enormous debt to it. But on the whole, the monastic movement was a colossal failure. In spite of the great examples of monastic piety, there is little evidence that monks and nuns normally attained the 'perfect' life, and a great deal that points in the opposite direction. Granted that there has been much exaggeration as to the moral abuses associated with monasteries, the fact remains that monastic routine is no panacea even for the sins of the flesh. 'The more we wash ourselves', exclaimed Luther during his Erfurt days, 'the more unclean do we become.'<sup>2</sup> Erasmus' criticism of monastic life was simply devastating: 'A monk's holy obedience consists in what? In leading an honest, chaste, and sober life? Not in the least. In acquiring learning, in study, and industry? Still less. A monk may be a glutton, a drunkard, a whoremonger, an ignorant,

<sup>1</sup> Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> 'Je länger wir uns waschen, um so unreiner werden wir,' Hausrath, *Luthers Leben*. Vol. I, p. 32.

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stupid, malignant, envious brute; but he has broken no vow, he is within his holy obedience',<sup>1</sup> and Erasmus, like Luther, knew from personal experience what monastic life really was. The sins of the spirit were found in the monasteries no less than those of the flesh. The relations between monks in the same monastery often left much to be desired—they were hardly what one would have expected in a Christian brotherhood. Men thrown continually together, without much to do in the way of useful practical activity, inevitably 'got on one another's nerves'. The point is well brought out in Browning's *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, where one monk expresses his feelings towards a brother-monk thus:

*Gr-r-r- there go, my heart's abhorrence!  
Water your damned flower-pots, do!  
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
God's Blood, would not mine kill you?*

Further, it is hardly part of Christian ethical perfection to turn away from active duty to the world in its bitter need, in order to bury oneself in a life of prayer and contemplation, seeking only the salvation of one's own soul. The example of Jesus clearly indicates that prayer and meditation are to be the prelude to sustained high activity. We need to beware of a religion which *substitutes* itself for everything; that kind of religion makes monks. We need a religion which *penetrates* everything; that was the religion exemplified in Jesus, and it makes Christians.

And what about the 'secular' Christian? If he really believes that the perfect Christian life can be lived only in retirement from the world, will not his conscience be uneasy, ever accusing him of being only half a Christian, of making a base compromise between Christianity and the spirit of this world? Thus the Roman Catholic 'double standard' idea fails to provide a solution of the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by J. A. Froude, *Short Studies in Great Subjects*, Vol. I, p. 77.

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ethical problem, either in the case of the 'religious' or the 'secular' Christian.

Protestantism is more in line with the ethical teaching of Jesus than either Roman or Greek Catholicism, for it does not acknowledge two standards, but insists that there is one way of life for all Christians, be they clerics or laymen. Luther maintained that the Christian found his chief ethical task and opportunity in his daily work in the world. To him, the Christian man who applied Christian principles and standards to the vocational tasks confronting him in the work-a-day world was a better servant of God than any monk in a cell; and the Christian mother who cared for the all-round welfare of her children was keeping a vigil more sacred than any nun. Such emphasis is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus. Nowhere does Jesus suggest that we should show the enemies of the good life a clean pair of heels! He counsels fight, not flight. Almost all the virtues which He extols are virtues which can be exercised only in ordinary social relations. How can a man follow the example of the Kind Samaritan if he spends all his days in a monastic cell? How is the love that sacrifices and serves to find expression in monkish seclusion? How can we further the cause of the Kingdom of God and resist the great enemies of every man and all the world, if we shut ourselves up in a cloister? The Ethic of Jesus is intended for life in this ordinary, every-day, temptation-ridden world. Whether the Fourth Evangelist is quoting the actual words of Jesus or not, he is giving expression to an essential thought of Jesus in that great petition of the High Priestly prayer: 'I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.' Keble's famous lines express perfectly the non-ascetic character of the true Christian Ethic:

*We need not bid, for cloistered cell,  
Our neighbour and our work farewell.  
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high  
For sinful man beneath the sky.*

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*The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask;  
Room to deny ourselves; a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.*

The same truth is expressed in another way in the words of John Milton: 'He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her seeming baits and pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out to seek her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.'<sup>1</sup>

Protestants alas! have not always been true to this characteristically Protestant and essentially Christian principle. Ascetic features have frequently vitiated extreme forms of Puritanism. For instance, it has often been argued that politics is a dirty game which Christians should eschew. But is it right in God's sight for the Christian to leave the management of civic and national and international affairs entirely in the hands of secularists? The man who plays a true Christian part in the City Council or the House of Commons is a far nobler type of Christian than the one who avoids politics through fear of being contaminated. We can thank God that men like Wilberforce and Shaftesbury did not decide to shun political activity lest they should sully their Christian souls. Similarly, card-playing, theatre-going and attendance at race-meetings have sometimes been declared tabu for the Christian. That the greatest evils have often been (and still are) associated with these things is undeniable, and from those evils the Christian will keep himself unspotted. But it is surely clear that there is no more evil in a game of cards as such than in a game of cricket; that the Christian disciple can quite legitimately go

<sup>1</sup> *Areopagitica*, p. 18.



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(say) to a Shakespearean play; and that there is no more harm in merely seeing horses race than in watching schoolboys at their sports. Again, complete abstinence from alcohol has sometimes been falsely declared to be of the very essence of Christian discipleship. That the perils of alcohol are grave in the extreme, and that the social evils resulting from excessive indulgence are appalling, is perfectly true; but no man has the right to fasten the yoke of total abstinence round the neck of a brother Christian—that self-control in the matter is essential to Christian discipleship he can fairly maintain, but further than that he cannot rightly go. The implication of extreme forms of Puritanism is that the more austere the life the more Christian it is. That it is possible to think far too much of pleasure, and to soften one's fibre by too much self-indulgence is so obvious as to need no comment. But it is quite false to infer from that fact that *all* forms of pleasure and self-indulgence must be renounced by the Christian. Jesus Himself did not go thus far! Such Protestant asceticism often erects unnecessary barriers which prevent some from walking in the Christian way who otherwise might do so, and it gives the 'world' the impression that Christianity is inseparable from narrow-mindedness, bigotry and gloom, and thus justifies the bitter taunt of the lines:

*The Puritan through life's sweet garden goes,  
And plucks the thorn and throws away the rose;  
He thinks to please by this peculiar whim  
The God Who framed and fashioned it for him.*

It can, therefore, hardly be too strongly insisted that the ethical teaching of Jesus is non-ascetic in character. The more normal and truly natural a human being the Christian is, the better able is he to commend his faith to the rest of mankind.

In conclusion, a word must be said about the truth in the ascetic ideal. The criticism that Christianity is ascetic 'fails to distinguish

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between the asceticism of self-discipline and the asceticism of self-mutilation, between that which aims at bringing the body under control, and that which aspires to belittle, suppress, and, in a sense, annihilate the body. The one vindicates, the other destroys, the right balance of human nature. . . . Christianity is unquestionably ascetic in the one sense, and as unquestionably non-ascetic in the other.<sup>1</sup> Self-discipline is inseparable from Christian discipleship. There is such a thing as what Lippmann calls 'a sane and civilised asceticism',<sup>2</sup> and he admits too that self-discipline is essential to the health of the soul. The ascetic has been called 'the athlete of religion', and a man can be a religious athlete without withdrawing from the world. It is for the Christian to seek to be morally and spiritually fit as the ordinary athlete seeks to be physically fit, and neither type of fitness can be attained without rigorous self-discipline.

The modern mania for self-expression indicates the urgent need of asceticism in the sense of self-discipline. The 'self-expression' cry is usually a plea for unbridled sex-indulgence. True as it is that the sex-instinct must not be repressed, yet it must be disciplined and controlled. 'The moment sex ceases to be a servant, it becomes a tyrant. There is something dangerous and disproportionate in its place in human nature, for whatever reason; and it does really need a special purification and dedication.'<sup>3</sup> Or as Hensley Henson puts it: 'The issue of asceticism, as well dualistic and disciplinary, has ever been, and still is, raised most insistently and conspicuously in connection with sexual life, for not only is the sexual passion the most energetic and unmanageable of all the physical appetites, but its influence on social intercourse, on aesthetic development, and on religious life, is profound, pervasive and far-reaching.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Preface to Morals*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *op. cit.* p. 196.

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The Christian aims at holiness of life, and he cannot achieve this end without self-discipline. He must, therefore, sit lightly to worldly pleasures and bodily delights; he must be no great lover of comfort or of luxury, for these things are apt to be debilitating to the soul. Self-discipline and real self-sacrifice are indispensable. To that extent, the true Christian is an ascetic. Yet the Christian's aim is not simply goodness, but a goodness that is creative and serviceable to the community, and therefore, in the monastic sense of the term, he is non-ascetic; for, often enough, even when the monk was really 'good', he was 'good' for nothing, and that is the antithesis of the Christian conception of the function of goodness.

### (b) THE IDEA THAT THE ETHIC OF JESUS HAS BUT A PURELY LOCAL AND TEMPORAL SIGNIFICANCE

It is sometimes contended that the modern man cannot be concerned with the ethical teaching of One who lived nearly two thousand years ago in an out of the way corner of the world, and in an obscure and backward part of the Roman Empire, who had not been educated in any recognised centre of learning, who did not pursue any vocation likely to broaden His outlook, and who had no personal contact with the greater movements of the civilised world. Further, it is pointed out that Jesus addressed His teaching to lowly people, fishermen, peasants, shepherds, who lived as a subject race in a pre-capitalistic age, when economic conditions were very simple and in the main agricultural. The argument is that while what Jesus had to say may have been profoundly significant to the people of His own time and place, it cannot in the very nature of things be applicable to people living in the vastly different conditions which obtain in the Europe and America of to-day. The modern man's ethical ideals, it is contended, must be suited to the present age, and it is

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eccentric and hopeless for him to try and glean them from ancient manuscripts. The conclusion reached is that the Christian ethic is now so old that it simply must perforce be antiquated and obsolete, and that a new ethic is required for the twentieth century.

At first sight this difficulty seems formidable enough, and the objectors appear to have reason on their side. Yet on closer examination it vanishes into thin air. In this connection there are three considerations of vital importance.

(1). It must not be supposed that because Jesus spoke to the people of His own time and place in the only idiom which they could understand, He therefore spoke *only* to his compatriots and contemporaries. It is quite true that the teaching of Jesus can be understood only when it is considered in the light of local and temporal conditions. Much of it was given in reply to problems presented by the Scribes and Pharisees and current Jewish thought—legalism, ostentatious piety, Jewish nationalism and particularism, Sabbath observance, etc. and questions which were then and there the liveliest of issues are here and now as dead as Dickens' door nail. It seems, therefore, on the face of it to be almost inevitable that such teaching can have no significance for the modern man whose live issues are totally different. But has not every great teacher addressed himself to the people and the peculiar problems of his time and place, and expressed himself in the idiom of those to whom he spoke? Who can fully appreciate all that Socrates and Plato and Aristotle had to say without considerable knowledge of the local and contemporary conditions? Yet no person of any culture would think of denying for an instant that all three of these Greek teachers have a significance for all time. The tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were written for people whose civilisation and mode of life and interests were vastly different from those of our modern Western world, and yet, to those who make the effort to understand them,

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they are as alive and fresh now as they were to Ancient Greece. Or to come to a phenomenon much nearer home. Shakespeare's plays reflect the conditions and the interests of English people in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, and were written for those times. Yet to-day they have been translated into every European language and form part of the repertoire of every theatre of any standing in the world, so that it is clear that they speak to people of our time and of all places. Now surely it is impossible reasonably to deny to Jesus of Nazareth a significance for every time and place, when such cannot be denied to Plato, Euripides and Shakespeare! More important still, in this connection, is the plain fact of experience that the message of Jesus is felt by at any rate some people in practically every land on the surface of the globe not only to be relevant to our time but to be the very light of life.

(2). It must not be overlooked that Man is timeless, and it is to Man that the ethical teaching of Jesus is addressed. As Professor A. E. Taylor reminds us, it is foolish to 'forget that, after all, our precursors, ourselves, and our distant successors—if we leave any—in the course of history, are all alike in being *men*: we have all the same ground-pattern, are all variations on one theme. A philosophy which ignores the reality of "universal human nature" . . . is a philosophy which does not look "under the skin"'.<sup>1</sup> The main problems of life are ever the same. When Jesus reminds us (Matt. xxiv. 37 f.), that in the days of Noah human beings were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, we see in a flash that the fundamental characteristics of human life are the same generation after generation—birth, growth, decline, death; toiling and resting, sorrowing and rejoicing, loving and hating, hoping and fearing. Laughter and tears are a language universally understood. The progress of civilisation affects, in the main, only the externals and accidentals of life; it adds to the

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. Vol. II, p. 78.

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conveniences, comforts and amenities of existence; it supplies better houses, better sanitation, swifter means of communication, new forms of entertainment and amusement. But the *real stuff* of human life is ever the same. The birth of a baby in a nomad's tent thousands of years ago meant to its parents precisely what the birth of a baby in a suburban villa means to parents to-day. The news of the death in battle of a dearly loved son is no less painful to a father to-day because it is brought by telegram than it was to David three thousand years ago when a courier reported the death of Absalom. When Isaac 'took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her' (Genesis xxiv. 67), the bridegroom's joy was just what it is to-day—the fact that the ancient bride arrived on a camel, while the modern bride arrives in a Daimler car makes no essential difference. The idea that because the external trappings of life are now so vastly different from what they were in the ancient world, life itself is vastly different, is a complete fallacy. The main features of human life abide the same through all economic and political changes.

Further, in his internal constitution man is pretty much the same in all ages and in every clime and coast. Human instincts, impulses and passions are free from all the limitations of time and space. Love and hatred, selfishness and self-sacrifice, never change their nature. There were cheating tradesmen in the days of Amos as in the black markets to-day. The weapons of warfare vary from age to age, but war itself still brings with it what it always brought—suffering, sorrow, wounds, death, devastation, waste, chaos, economic strain and stress. The tendency of man to oppress and exploit his fellows takes many different forms according as the oppressed are slaves or serfs or factory-workers or charwomen, but in its essence it is eternally the same, the more it changes the more it remains the same thing. Man's inhumanity to man is like the fabulous hydra—as soon as one head is cut off, another appears, but the nature of the beast does not vary.

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So the idea that human life is a very different thing from what it was at the beginning of our era, and that human problems are very different now from what they were then, can be dismissed as an idle fancy. Just as the tiny dewdrop reflects the vast heavens, so any civilised man, whatever the age in which he lives and whatever his habitat, is an epitome of mankind. Jesus spoke to MAN and, therefore, to the entire human race.

(3). It is no less true that the ethical teaching of Jesus is timeless. The temporal and local conditions in which the teaching was given are a transparent garment; the Jewish-Palestinian-first-century dress cannot conceal its eternal content. His teaching on the sacredness of human personality, on the brotherhood of man, on the duties of kindness and unselfishness is not only not out of date but is the very message which is now being proclaimed in the name of science!<sup>1</sup> Not only is such a message relevant to the modern world, but civilisation will go down 'in hideous ruin and combustion' if it ignores it. It will always be part of the ethical ideal for man to show compassion to the needy and the suffering as the Kind Samaritan did; to be merciful to repentant prodigals as the father in the parable was; to check vindictive feeling instead of insanely demanding eye for eye and tooth for tooth; to stifle in the heart the first motions of sullen hatred and unbridled lust; to do to others as he wishes to be done by; to subdue inordinate self-love; to honour his word so that men may know that his yea means yea and his nay nay; to temper justice with understanding and charity in all his judgments; to spurn vanity and display and self-complacency; to be ready to forgive in great-hearted fashion; to find more joy in giving than in getting, and to recognise that true greatness consists in high service. It will always be true, as Aristotle in his way recognised, that moral and spiritual insight comes to a man according as his heart is cleansed from evil. If such, in broad outline, is the Ethic of Jesus, those who suggest that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Julian S. Huxley, *Evolutionary Ethics*, p. 53.

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in the very nature of things it is impossible for anyone who lived in an obscure corner of the world many centuries ago to supply an ethical ideal for the modern man are talking the sheerest balderdash, and their slick theory is refuted by indubitable fact.

There are many utterances of Jesus which, in spite of their immediate reference to purely local and contemporary conditions nevertheless have eternal significance. Jesus was thinking of the spiritual obtuseness of Jewish religious leaders who had been trained in the rabbinical schools when He cried: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes' (Matt. xi. 25). But He might just as appropriately have uttered them on Mar's Hill as a rebuke to the intellectual arrogance of many Athenians. He might give the same rebuke to multitudes in the great University centres to-day, in Harvard or Oxford, in Chicago or Berlin, for while nobody but a fool depreciates the intellect or despises scholarship, the fact remains that intellectual pride and arrogance have a blighting and blasting effect upon the soul and make the very ablest man spiritually purblind. It is eternally true that without humility and receptiveness no man can have spiritual vision, and that the greatest scholar can enter the Kingdom of God only on the same terms as the common man, namely, as a little child! Jesus was dealing with a very trifling issue, the petty wrangling of a few Galilean fishermen as to who of them was greatest, when He said: 'You know that they who aspire<sup>1</sup> to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not to be so among you: but whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you shall be the slave of all' (Mark x. 42 f.). But there is a message here for all men to the very end of time. It would have been just as much to the point at a Nazi Party Meeting at Nuremberg or at a Grand

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, p. 153.



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Fascist Council at Rome, and it would be just as apposite in all places where commercial and industrial magnates foregather to-day. The words 'You cannot serve God and mammon' (Matt. vi. 24), were addressed to a simple Palestinian audience long ago, but they would be no less pertinent to-day to any assembly of business men in Pittsburg, London, Paris or Tokyo.

So there is nothing that is purely local or transient in the ethical teaching of Jesus. It transcends all the limits of space and time. It is adaptable to all nations, to all races, to all types of civilisation, to all conditions. It can never be out of date until man himself is out of date. As Goethe said: 'However much intellectual culture advances, let the human mind expand as it will, beyond the sublimity and the moral culture of Christianity, as it gleams and glitters in the gospels, it will never go.'<sup>1</sup> Or in the words of another: 'The morality which Christianity inspires and demands is never left behind by the developing race, but ever moves in front of it like the fabled pillar of Israel's guidance through the wilderness, an ideal and a prophecy. . . . A perfect civilisation and a rightly apprehended Christianity would harmonise, for the kind of social conduct required by Christianity is identical with that which the health and permanence of civilisation demands.'<sup>2</sup>

### (c) THE 'INTERIMSETHIK' IDEA

Johannes Weiss in his *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reich Gottes* (1892, 1900) and (to a less degree) in his interpretation of the Gospels in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, advanced the theory that a great deal of the ethical teaching of Jesus was influenced by His eschatological ideas. He acknowledges that part of His teaching was not coloured by eschatology, for example, His expressions of delight in Nature and in the world of men, His discussions

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* pp. 27 and 151.

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about the Law, His emphasis on the love of God and neighbour, and some of His parables. But as for the rest, it can be understood, Weiss held, only in the light of the eschatological idea that the end of the present world-order was at hand, and would mean a glorious salvation for some and the most frightful ruin for others. The argument is that just as in time of war exceptional laws come into force for the period of the emergency, so a great deal of the ethical teaching of Jesus had a special emergency character, and was intended for the brief interval of time between His own day and the establishment of the Kingdom. This teaching, therefore, is to be regarded as an eschatological Interim-Ethics, which has neither lasting nor literal validity for us to-day, seeing that we no longer share the eschatological views of Jesus.

In this Interim-Ethics, Weiss holds that Jesus makes enormous, superhuman and (in ordinary circumstances) impossible demands. His eschatological view of the world made Him indifferent to any concern about the world's future (for it was to have no future), and to many of the values which, in normal circumstances, men are simply bound to cherish. These extraordinary demands are seen in the call to repentance, in the conception of righteousness found in the Sermon on the Mount, a righteousness which has unworldly superhuman features—hatred is to be renounced as well as murder; lust as well as adultery; love of enemies is required; resistance of evil is forbidden. Men are called upon to give up their earthly possessions, to set no store by family life and love. The worth of the goods of this world—family, property, civilisation, the State—vanishes in the expectation of an imminent world catastrophe which will destroy all such things. Men are called upon to sever all the ties that bind them to this present world, and to make themselves ripe and ready for the Kingdom of God.

This same idea occurs, if anything in a more extreme form, in Albert Schweitzer's *Das Messianitäts und Leidensgeheimnis*, and

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*Von Reimarus to Wrede* (in English under the title: 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus'). According to Schweitzer Jesus is not a 'Welt-bejaher' (World-affirmer) but a 'Weltverneiner' (World-denier), and consequently dissociates Himself completely from the life and civilisation of this world; His one concern being with the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus the peculiar characteristic of Jesus' moral teaching was a negative attitude to all that concerned this present earthly life—the family, the state and property; and His Ethics was just an Interim-Ethics, a moral code applicable only to the short intervening period between this present world and the world to come.

The best that can be said about all this is that 'the theory of Schweitzer makes Christ a psychological monster, and His character an insoluble enigma'.<sup>1</sup> If this eschatological view of the ethical teaching of Jesus is correct, the most outstanding features of that teaching have to be dismissed as only temporarily valid. But where is this influence actually seen? It is difficult to find a single ethical precept in the Gospels which can fairly be regarded as intended, and therefore valid, only for the brief interval to which Weiss and Schweitzer refer. Herrmann sees only one example: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth, etc.' (Matt. vi. 19 f.), and regards this as doubtful.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as the theory is carefully examined in the light of the actual teaching of Jesus, its absurdity becomes manifest. It is true that Jesus linked His call to repentance with the announcement that the Kingdom of God was at hand, but that does not imply that the demand for a complete change of front had only a temporary validity. In all ages, men lost in selfishness and material pursuits need a drastic change of mind and attitude. The better righteousness commended in the Sermon on the Mount is as

<sup>1</sup> Dean Inge, *op. cit.* p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Sittlichen Weisungen Jesu* (pp. 32 ff. 53 f.) quoted by Feine, *op. cit.* p. 168.

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necessary to-day as ever. No man is in a healthy moral state if there is sullen hatred in his heart whether or not it finds expression in an anti-social act; or if he revels in lascivious thoughts, desires and imaginations whether or not they actually lead him into adultery or fornication. The idea that to ask men to care for the well-being of their enemies is a superhuman demand is simply fantastic—belied by any British soldier who spontaneously offers a cigarette to a captured Fritz! The willingness to do a service to one who has injured him is for ever the sign and token of a magnanimous man, and to declare magnanimity to be a mere ingredient of Interim-Ethics is simply grotesque. There are remarkable Old Testament examples of magnanimity, such as Joseph's generous treatment of the brothers who had so cruelly wronged him in his boyhood, and David's generosity in sparing the life of the man who had made his life bitter by hunting him like a partridge upon the mountains. The annals of every nation contain remarkable instances of similar generosity. Garibaldi, for instance, was a very magnanimous soldier. Nelson's prayer on the eve of the Battle of Trafalgar shows the same spirit: 'May humanity after victory be the predominant feature of the British Fleet.' Such magnanimity is acclaimed by all ages as the noblest adornment of human life, and it has no more to do with eschatology than with the man in the moon.

Equally absurd is the notion that 'Resist not evil' is simply an interim regulation. Does not vindictive passion *always* need to be renounced and abhorred? The motive behind such a precept was not the idea that the end of the world was at hand so that resistance was superfluous, but the conviction that retaliation makes men bitterer enemies than before, while self-restraint and generosity often quench the fires of hatred and turn foes into friends. In this connection Jesus quite clearly lays bare His motive, for He goes on to call upon men to behave like their Heavenly Father Who causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends His

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rain on the just and the unjust. That Jesus never called on men utterly to renounce family life has already been made abundantly clear. That we should sit lightly to our earthly possessions is a truth not just for an interim but for all time. It is eternally true that it is a vain thing to store up treasure for oneself and fail to be rich towards God. Whether the end of the world is at hand or not, any Rich Fool knows that any night his life may be forfeit, and that, though he is as rich as Croesus, his possessions cannot keep death at bay. Whether life is to be long or short it is *always* imperative to value one's spiritual goods more than one's material possessions. The transitoriness of all earthly things is a fact which no sensible man ignores. 'The world passeth away and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 John ii. 17). It is no interim truth but a truth for all time that James Shirley expressed in the lines:

*The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armour against Fate;  
Death lays his icy hands on Kings.*

So we can rest assured that the ethical teaching of Jesus does not rest on an eschatological foundation, and, therefore, is not undermined when that foundation is undermined. What Dean Inge says about the moral teaching of the prophets applies no less—*mutatis mutandis*—to the moral teaching of Jesus: 'The prophets combined earnest ethical exhortations with denunciatory predictions about a coming "Day of the Lord" . . . but the moral exhortations were not determined by the expectations of any miraculous catastrophe.'<sup>1</sup> Or as E. F. Scott says: 'The real effect of the apocalyptic hope was not to distort and narrow but to intensify the moral demands of Jesus.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 45.

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That the ethical teaching of Jesus has an apocalyptic background is undeniable, but to infer from that fact that the Ethic is a mere interim Ethic is quite false. In His ethical teaching Jesus calls on men to prepare themselves for the rule of God and promulgates the eternal laws of the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

### (d) THE ETHICS OF JESUS NOT IMPRACTICABLE

The man of the world is apt to dismiss the ethical teaching of Jesus as inapplicable to the hard realities of life, as too good for human nature's daily food. In reply, there are three considerations to be taken into account.

(1). The man of the world often goes widely astray in his exegesis and thus fails to understand the teaching of Jesus. Vivid Oriental imagery he often interprets literally. If our Lord's words 'It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God' be taken literally, the only logical conclusion is that it is an absolute impossibility for any rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. But to interpret such language literally is as foolish as to ask, in reference to another saying of Jesus—How could a man strain a gnat out of a glass of wine and leave a camel in it? All that Jesus meant by the former saying is that it is extremely difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, and only by the grace of God is it possible at all. Jesus speaks disparagingly of riches not simply on the ground that they are often ill-gotten and ill-used, but because they so often lead to self-indulgence, the over-valuation of material things, and false confidence. As Middleton Murry says: 'Not the possession of wealth so much as the attachment to wealth was what He denounced.'<sup>2</sup> Anybody familiar with the hardening and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Montefiore (*Synoptic Gospels*, I, p. 53): 'It is not right to call his ethical doctrine a mere "Interimsethik". Righteousness was to be the keynote of the new Kingdom as well as the passport of admission within its gates'.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus*, p. 193.

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coarsening effect upon the soul of materialistic thinking will concede the soundness of our Lord's thought about riches. Similarly only an absurd literalness would lead anyone to suppose that hatred of kith and kin is a pre-condition of Christian discipleship; yet the business man who knows to what extremes some men will go, and how close they will sail to the wind, in order to make money so as to be able to gratify the extravagant tastes of their families, will recognise the justice of the plea that a man should love honour and fair play more even than his family.

Again, when sayings of Jesus are taken completely out of their context, they appear to the ordinary man to be grotesquely impracticable. The exhortation to give to everybody who asks and to lend to everybody who wishes to borrow (Matt. v. 42), inevitably appears to be advice which, if duly followed, would lead straight to the bankruptcy court. But the question at issue is the avoidance of vindictive behaviour to one who has wronged us. What the modern business man should understand is that Jesus is calling upon him not to refuse to help by a gift or a loan a fellow-creature in dire need, simply because he wishes to gratify feelings of private vengeance against him. Many of the criticisms directed by practical men against the ethical teaching of Jesus are based upon a misapprehension of what Jesus actually means, and upon the failure to recognise that Jesus is concerned not with rules and regulations, but with attitude and spirit.

(2). When the man of the world protests that the teaching of Jesus is impracticable, he sometimes means that it is pitched impossibly high. This objection is raised especially in connection with what Jesus has to say about retaliation. The natural man is apt to conceive that it is his right, and, indeed, his manly duty, to be even with his adversary, and to give to every man the treatment he deserves. The motto of Edinburgh Castle is the motto of the natural man: *Nemo me impune lacessit*. Yet in actual experience, the practicality and realism are seen on examination to be with

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Jesus. We invariably discover in ordinary social life, that to meet insult with insult, wrong with wrong, is to make matters worse, and to add fuel to a small fire so that it becomes a dangerous conflagration. It is precisely the same in the international field. The agelong tragic feud between Germany and France, between Teuton and Slav, persists with woeful results not only to the peoples immediately concerned, but to all mankind. The policy of revenge is direful. The point is well illustrated in Tennyson's poem, 'The Voyage of Maeldune'. An Irish chief was on his way to kill the man who had slain his father, when he came to 'the Isle of a Saint who had sail'd with St. Brendan of yore.' The Saint addressed Maeldune as follows:

*O Maeldune, let be this purpose of thine!  
Remember the words of the Lord when he said 'Vengeance is mine'.  
His fathers have slain thy fathers in war or in single strife,  
Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each taken a life for a life,  
Thy father had slain his father, how long shall the murder last?  
Go back to the Isle of Finn, and suffer the past to be past.*

Maeldune saw the wisdom and the practical common sense of this advice, and the poem concludes with the words:

*And we came to the Isle we were blown from, and there on the shore was  
he,  
The man who had slain my father, I saw him and let him be.  
O weary was I of the travel, the trouble, the strife and the sin  
When I landed again, with a tithe of my men, on the Isle of Finn.*

It is a common idea amongst practical men that justice is the very pinnacle of virtue, and that it is always right, and, indeed, essential to the well-being of society always to inflict upon a man the punishment he deserves. It is precisely that conception of justice which Jesus repudiates both in the Parable of the Prodigal Son and in that of the Labourers in the Vineyard, who all alike



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received a denarius whether they had toiled twelve hours or only one. In these parables Jesus pleads that men should be *more than just*, ready ever to give their fellows better than they deserve. The man who refuses in any circumstances to remit the penalty that deservedly falls upon the wrong doer, and persists in that refusal no matter how truly repentant the culprit is, may be just, but, so far as the victim is concerned, such justice is sterile. Mere justice often crushes the very souls of men, while in generous treatment there is a creative and redemptive force that quickens the nobler elements in human nature. The methods of Jesus are more realist and more practical than the ways of the world.

That the ethical ideal of Jesus is difficult of attainment must, of course, be conceded, for it is heroic and perfectionist. But what would be the use to mankind of an ideal easily attainable? We have to hitch our waggon to a star. 'Es wächst der Mensch mit seinen grössern Zwecken.'<sup>1</sup> If the ethical ideal of Jesus were easily attainable, He would be criticised for pitching the ideal too low.

The notion that the so called 'impossible' ideals are useless is clearly false. Even if no one ever has attained or ever, in this world, will attain the ideal of Jesus, it is not for that reason to be dismissed as impracticable. Just as the tidal movements of the sea are due to the pull of the sun and the moon, so the ethical life of man is being raised to higher levels by the pull of the lofty ideals which Jesus holds up before mankind.

*Who aimeth at the Sky  
Shoots higher much than he that means a tree.*<sup>2</sup>

To care for one's neighbour as for oneself, to put the interests of the community before private gain, to regard business and industry as forms of human service, may be ideals difficult to carry out in practice, but it is only as men cherish such ideals that they

<sup>1</sup> Schiller, *Wallenstein*, Prolog, line 60.

<sup>2</sup> George Herbert, "The Church Porch."

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themselves can be saved from moral and spiritual stagnation and society from chaos. The precepts of Jesus are, in the long run, the only cement which will hold society together.

(3). The man of the world overlooks the fact that the Ethics of Jesus are religious ethics, the ethics of the Kingdom of God. It is only from this point of view that the ethical ideal of Jesus becomes really intelligible and practicable. The ethical ideal of Jesus is an ideal only for the man who is in touch with the power of God, and who knows the Kingdom of God within him. As E. F. Scott says: 'It is all important to recognise that though the ethical counts for so much in Jesus' teaching, He does not value it for its own sake. The end of right living is to gain the Kingdom of God. There is a higher world to which men as God's children belong, and by way of righteousness they can obtain part in it. A day is coming when the world of reality will be revealed, and even now we can in some measure apprehend it, and thereby attain to true life. These two aspects of the Kingdom of God, as at once the moral order and the higher spiritual order, are inseparable in Jesus' thought, and the denial of one or the other has been the cause of endless confusion. . . . Although His teaching is directed for the most part to right conduct, Jesus is not occupied with morality but with fellowship with God. . . . So instead of substituting morality for religion, Jesus makes religion everything. "That ye may become the children of your Father who is in heaven": this is the one end and motive of all right living.'<sup>1</sup>

### (e) THE IDEA OF REWARD IN THE ETHICS OF JESUS

Jesus does not hesitate to appeal to the idea of Reward. 'For great is your reward in heaven' (Matt. v. 12). 'He who welcomes a prophet just because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and he who welcomes a righteous man just because he is a

<sup>1</sup> *The Kingdom of God*, pp. 76 f., 100 f.

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righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward' (Matt. x. 41). Nor does He hesitate to appeal to the fear of hell, 'But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna' (Matt. x. 28).

This aspect of the teaching of Jesus is sometimes criticised as a relapse into the Hebrew idea that a life of piety and virtue is a good investment. It was a common Hebrew belief that the good man was rewarded with long life, a large family, prosperity, wealth, health and happiness. This notion is almost painfully conspicuous in Psalm xci.: 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; But it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.' Such words are likely to encourage the idea that piety and virtue are the best policy, so that they degenerate into mere selfish calculation, and become a glorified egoistic hedonism. The Book of Job is occupied with this problem. In the Prologue, it reaches its zenith of nobility, but in the Epilogue it sinks to its nadir. Job is introduced to us as a noble-minded man who was prepared, if necessary, to serve God for nought, to cling to piety and virtue even though they brought no reward but suffering and death. At the end, however, there is something of a relapse into normal Hebrew thought, for we are told: 'So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and one thousand yoke of oxen and one thousand she asses (that is, twice as many as before). He had also seven sons and three daughters' (xlii. 12-13). In contrast to this rather prudential idea of virtue, even Pagan ethics, at its best, declared for virtue for virtue's sake, independently of any reward.

In the modern world it is regarded almost as a truism that it is a mean and ignoble thing to associate virtue with the idea of

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reward. 'Virtue for virtue's sake' is the slogan. Consequently, the part played by the reward idea in the ethical teaching of Jesus is criticised as a serious ethical defect.

It is true enough that the idea of performing a good deed for the sake of a material reward is ignoble and reduces virtue to the mean posture of accepting gratuities. The modern man, quite rightly, refuses to be enticed into virtue by the hope of reward, or dragooned into it by the fear of punishment. It is for this reason that we extol the idea, nowadays, of duty for duty's sake, without any ulterior motive. We admire Joan of Arc most, when, at the height of her public career, on being invited by the Dauphin to name the reward she wanted and being assured that what she asked would be granted though it made the kingdom poor to meet her request, instead of seeking anything for herself, she advanced the simple plea that the poor people in her native village of Domrémy should have their taxes remitted. We admire Garibaldi most when, on being offered by King Victor Immanuel, as a reward for his services, an estate for one son, a title for another, a dowry for his daughter, and a royal castle and a steamer for himself, he politely declined these tempting offers, and returned to his rocky island home in the Mediterranean with no other spoils of war than a bag of seed-corn for his little farm.<sup>1</sup> The spirit displayed by Joan and Garibaldi was like that of the young knight of King Arthur's Table, who, on being asked what reward he wanted for saving a man's life, proudly replied:

*None, for the deed's sake have I done the deed,  
In uttermost obedience to the King.*<sup>2</sup>

Such is the spirit, too, in which most thoughtful men now-a-days face the ethical problems of life—they feel that the higher the level of virtue, the more complete the indifference to all hopes of

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *The Making of Italy*, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, 'Gareth and Lynette'.

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reward. Similarly, even preachers to-day, unlike their predecessors of earlier generations, do not seek to win men to the faith by glowing descriptions of the glories of heaven, or to scare them into it by vivid portrayals of the pangs of hell. The reason is not that they have ceased to believe heaven and hell are in some sense real, but that they feel that such appeals are unworthy, and ethically defective. Modern sympathies are rather with the ancient woman of Alexandria who is said to have promenaded the streets of the city with an ewer of water in the one hand and a torch in the other, declaring that she wished to quench hell and destroy Paradise, so that men might love God for Himself alone.

In such types of thought there is something noble and heroic, but nevertheless something defective and fallacious—and it is that defect and fallacy which the teaching of Jesus avoids. There are noble rewards as well as mean ones, and there is nothing unethical in the idea that virtue brings a noble reward. Action by which nothing is achieved is useless, and if a good action led to nothing beyond itself, we could only with difficulty brace ourselves to it. That good actions should issue in satisfaction is not an ignoble consideration. If no satisfaction (and therefore no reward) of any kind issued from virtuous action, men would inevitably question whether it was really worth while. Though Joan of Arc and Garibaldi obtained no material reward, they derived infinite satisfaction from the thought that they had served their country—and that was a reward. The young Knight Gareth got the satisfaction of knowing that he had saved a fellow-creature's life, and that was his reward. So in ordinary life, a deed of charity to-day is not necessarily rewarded with a stroke of good luck to-morrow, but it gets its reward—the joy of service, and a nature enlarged and enriched. A high standard of honour usually brings no reward in the shape of material prosperity (and honesty as the best policy is clearly not honesty at all), but it gets a reward—a clear conscience and peace of heart. As Alexander Pope says:

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*What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,  
The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy  
Is virtue's prize: a better would you fix?*<sup>1</sup>

And centuries before Pope, Horace wrote:

*aut virtus nomen inane est  
aut decus et pretium recte petit experiens vir.*<sup>2</sup>

(Either virtue is an empty name, or the man who makes the attempt justly aims at honour and reward). Even so rigorous a champion of 'Duty for Duty's sake' as Kant recognised that while virtue was the *summum bonum*, yet the *bonum consummatum* was virtue together with the appropriate amount of happiness—in other words, he held that virtue *ought* to have its reward. The soundness of Kant's thought at this point is not invalidated by Schopenhauer's taunt that Kant's virtue, which at first bore itself so bravely towards happiness, lost its independence later, and held out its hand for a tip.

We can now return to the place which the idea of reward occupies in the teaching of Jesus. (1). On the general question of Heaven and Hell, to both of which Jesus made unhesitating appeal, the following words of Professor A. E. Taylor are much to the point: 'It seems to me that in its substance—I say nothing now of disfiguring accidental accretions—the Christian doctrine of a *final* salvation and reprobation springs less from theological hardness of heart than from seriousness of moral conviction. It is the supreme assertion of the conviction that choice is real and that everything is staked on the quality of our choice. If happiness depends on character and character is genuinely made by our choice, we cannot refuse to contemplate the possibility that character, and with it happiness, may be lost beyond the power of recovery by

<sup>1</sup> 'Essay on Man'.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistles*, I, xvii, lines 41-2.

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sufficient persistence in choosing evil or sufficient indolence in choosing good. If we choose the worse long enough, or even neglect to practise choice of the good, we may conceivably end by making ourselves incapable of effective choice of the better, just as surely as by choosing good with sufficient persistence we may come to be incapable of choosing its contrary.<sup>1</sup> (2). Jesus repudiated the Jewish 'contract' idea of piety and virtue, the idea that the pious and virtuous man has a claim on God for a reward exactly proportionate to his piety and virtue. Such is, (in part), the teaching of the parable which relates how a vineyard proprietor paid all the labourers exactly the same wage in spite of the variation in the hours of labour. (3) He declared that those whose pious practices were inspired by the hope of a secular reward, viz., the esteem of men, would get no other reward. The Greek verb used here (*ἀπέρχομαι*) was the word commonly used in the receipting of bills, so that its use in Matt. vi. implies that having won popular esteem the paraders of piety have receipted their bill and therefore have no further claim on that account. (4). He counselled men to do good to their fellows without expecting to receive something from them in return by way of reward. He even suggested that the people to invite to a feast were those who could not return the invitation (Luke xiv. 13 f.). 'But love your enemies and do them good and lend expecting nothing back' (Luke vi. 35). (5). Even the Utilitarian recognises that virtue, on the whole, leads to pleasure; and vice, on the whole, leads to pain. There is nothing unethical in pointing to such a plain fact of experience. Our Lord did undoubtedly often appeal to this fact of experience, but He never made careful calculation of prospective pleasure and pain the *motive* of the good life. (6). So far from making the desire to gain happiness and avoid misery the motive of the moral life, Jesus teaches that no acts have real moral

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. Vol. I, p. 131.

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worth unless they are done freely out of utterly uncalculating goodness of heart. In the Parable of the Last Judgment, which has been aptly called the Parable of Great Surprises, those who are declared worthy of Eternal Life are amazed, so completely are they unaware of any merit in their behaviour—a reminder that virtue at its highest is unconscious of itself. (7). As MacNeile points out, Jesus substitutes the idea of *qualitative* reward for *quantitative* reward.<sup>1</sup> The reward of the pure in heart is the vision of God, and there is nothing unethical in appealing to such a reward as that. The rewards Jesus offers are rewards which only people in a high moral and spiritual state would appreciate, such as 'fulness of life', 'entrance into the Kingdom of God'. By denying himself, a man gains something for his own soul. By being the servant of all he becomes the greatest of all. By losing his life he finds it. The rewards offered to the righteous are simply the inevitable issue of righteousness in a world under the governance of God. (8). There is nothing unethical in the appeal to Eternal Life as a reward. As E. F. Scott says: 'Action by which nothing is gained is futile. Even goodness which achieved no end beyond itself would be meaningless, and you cannot require of men that they should practise it. This is frankly acknowledged by Jesus. With His strong sense of reality He will have nothing to do with the sentimental ethic which assumes that goodness, the one vital thing in the world, should be satisfied although it leads to no result.'<sup>2</sup> If the final end of the most pious and virtuous man were but corruption, earth and worms, it would be difficult to resist the conclusion that piety at its noblest and virtue at its highest were, after all, but a flash in the pan. Life would then appear to be what Macbeth called it—'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.'

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on St. Matthew*, pp. 54 f.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, p. 64.



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*If the wages of Virtue be dust,  
Would she have the heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?  
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,  
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:  
Give her the wages of going on and not to die.<sup>1</sup>*

Jesus claims that God has such a reward for the righteous. In a world governed by God, virtue does inevitably bring its own reward, not a material reward, but one that is spiritual and noble. If we were living in a Universe where virtue brought no reward and vice no punishment, we should no longer be able to believe in a living God.

### (f) NIETZSCHE'S REPUDIATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The most savage attack made on Christian Ethics in modern times is that of Nietzsche (1844-1900), a clergyman's son! His strange 'philosophy' is somewhat difficult to understand and easy to misrepresent. It is by no means free from inconsistencies, and appears to be, to some extent, inconsistent with the man himself, who is said to have been gentle and amiable in private life, though his writings (and, often enough, even his letters) suggest a very ferocious and violently aggressive personality. He believed himself to be of noble origin, and that perhaps accounts for the aristocratically haughty strain in his character. When he taught boys Greek at the Pädagogium in Basle, he concentrated his attention on the gifted boy and left the average or weak boy to work out his own salvation. Just as a straw shows the direction of the wind, so that procedure was symbolic of the devotion to the Superman and the contempt for the ordinary man which, later on, was characteristic of his thought.

He starts out from the assumption that the world is non-moral, purposeless, and has no goal; that the idea of God is pure fiction,

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, 'Wages'.

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and that all hopes of a life beyond the grave are vain. But since mankind must have some definite goal, it must set itself one, namely, to produce a higher and superior species of man, culminating eventually in the Super-Man, in comparison with whom man as he is known to-day will be as much a laughing-stock and thing of shame as is the ape in comparison with man. All religious and political and social ideas which hinder the coming of the Super-Man must be ruthlessly swept aside. The chief of these hindrances Nietzsche declared to be Christianity, 'the greatest of all conceivable corruptions, the one immortal blemish on mankind.'<sup>1</sup> How, then, can the Super-Man be brought into being? By a eugenic revision of our present marriage laws, by a sound education in the exact sciences and real art, and by the annihilation of the Christian Church!

Nietzsche regards man as a mere bridge—a rope over an abyss—between the animal and the Super-Man. A people, he maintains, is simply a round-about way taken by Nature to produce a dozen great men, and he lays down the principle that humanity must always act in such a way as to bring geniuses into the world—such is humanity's task, and it has no other. There is to be a master-class of Super-Men and a slave-class of ordinary men; and the mass of men are therefore slaves who exist simply for the purpose of bringing the Super-Man into being. '*I teach you the Super-Man*. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man? All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves, and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man? The Super-Man is the meaning of the earth! I conjure you, my brethren, remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak to you of super-earthly hopes.'<sup>2</sup> The idea that the mass of men are thus doomed to slavery does not in any way daunt Nietzsche.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. A. Mügge, *Nietzsche*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mügge, *op. cit.* p. 28.

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He says: 'Slavery is one of the essential conditions of a high culture: that is, it must be said, a truth which leaves room for no illusion as to the absolute value of existence. That is the vulture that devours the liver of the modern Prometheus, the champion of civilisation. The misery of the men who struggle painfully through life must be increased to allow a small number of Olympic geniuses to produce great works of art.'<sup>1</sup>

The idea that men should toil and strive to secure a worthier and nobler future for the human race on this planet is not ignoble. On the contrary it is one of the great aims of the Christian gospel. But Nietzsche's ideas about that nobler future are quite another matter, for his Super-Man seems to be little better than a blonde brute. That much could be accomplished for the improvement of the human stock by preventing the unfit from propagating their kind is certain. The notion that an education which concerned itself in the main with the exact sciences would automatically produce a nobler race is an obvious absurdity, as countless facts could be adduced to prove. As for the idea that the annihilation of the Christian Church would make for a higher type of man, what we actually see before our eyes is the inexpugnable fact that it is precisely in those parts of Europe where the Christian Church is weakest that moral degeneration is most pronounced. As mankind is thus divided into two classes, Super-Men and slaves, or 'birds of prey' and 'lambs', there are, of necessity, says Nietzsche, two moral codes. The moral code suited to the 'birds of prey' is not suited to the 'lambs', and vice versa. 'Good' for the Super-Men means noble, and 'bad' despicable; while for the slaves, 'good' means useful, and 'bad' dangerous. The lambs naturally say: 'These birds of prey are evil, and he who is so far removed from being a bird of prey, who is rather its opposite, a lamb, is he

<sup>1</sup> *Der Genius*, sec. 2, quoted by Henri Lichtenberger. (Translated by J. M. Kennedy), p. 61.

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not good?'<sup>1</sup> Thus there is a Master- or Bird-of-Prey- and Slave- or Lamb-Morality.

The Super-Men create values of their own. They dismiss, as phantoms of the imagination, belief in duty or in goodness or in God or in Truth or in the Categorical Imperative. Reality is found only in the desires and passions. For Nietzsche, the primary evolutionary principle is not the competitive fight, the struggle for existence, but the struggle for might, the Will to Power. The only aim of the Super-Man is the increase of his power. 'Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body. Behind thy thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a mighty lord, an unknown sage—it is called Self; it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body. That which is called "flesh" and "body" is of such incalculably greater importance that the rest is nothing more than a small appurtenance. To continue the chain of life so that it becomes even more powerful—that is the task.'<sup>2</sup>

The Super-Man despises weakness and cowardice in all its forms. He sets small store by pity or disinterestedness. Unselfishness he regards as profitable to his neighbour but not to himself. The virtues of the master, typified in the conception of the Superman, are 'the virtues, namely, of strength, might, pushfulness, of cunning even, and cruelty. For the goal of humanity lies not in the mediocre well-being of the multitude, but in the pride and joy of life obtainable by those who hesitate not to be remorseless, without scruple, and to aggrandise themselves to the uttermost.'<sup>3</sup>

Christianity, however, is regarded as supplying an adequate moral code for the slaves. Their lot is unhappy in the extreme, but their religious faith is an inestimable benefit to them. It throws a ray of sunshine on their poor semi-animal existence. It ennobles

<sup>1</sup> Mügge, *op. cit.* p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> G. Dawes Hicks, *H.J.*, October 1914, pp. 98 f.

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for them the harsh necessity of submitting to the will of others. It leads them to the beneficent illusion that there is a universal order of things in which their place is set aside for them, and in which they have their own useful work to do. They *can* practise Christian morality, for the Christian moral code is just suited to them.

Nietzsche's violent antipathy to the Christian ethic was due to the fact that he felt that it was opposed to the principle of Natural Selection, in that it inculcated pity and compassion for the unfortunate. 'The weak and the botched shall perish; first principle of our humanity. And they ought even to be helped to perish. What is more harmful than any vice? Practical sympathy with all the botched and the weak—Christianity!' <sup>1</sup> Humility, considerateness, the unselfish service of suffering humanity, regard for the common man, all the gentler virtues which play so big a part in the Christian scheme of things, were to him as a red rag to a bull. The truth is that the Christian is as much concerned about physical fitness as Nietzsche. Jesus Himself cared for the bodies of men as well as for their souls. The aim of hospitals, which Christians were the first to erect, is to restore the 'weak and the botched' to health and strength. Nietzsche's idea that Christian compassion for the sick and weak is 'dangerous to life' is thus clearly absurd. He urged men to become hard, to find in mercy and pity the most subtle dangers. He held that to be able to suffer pain was a small thing, to which even weak women and slaves could rise; what was wanted was the kind of man who would not be shipwrecked on the rocks of inner distress when he inflicted pain and heard the cries of pain—to be in such a state as that was to be great!

Such, then, is Nietzsche's brave new world—a world of Super-Men masters and ordinary men slaves, the Super-men founding their splendour on the misery of a multitude of creatures who are oppressed and exploited for their benefit. Those who suppose that

<sup>1</sup> Mügge, *op. cit.* p. 46.

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we should get a nobler race if we lived in a world which never elicited our pity and compassion, and if every municipality had its gas-chamber and incinerator for 'the botched and the weak', should think again. If his philosophy were true, and the mass of men realised their actual condition according to that philosophy, life would cease to be worth living so far as they were concerned, and the sooner dynamite was applied to the planet, the better.

When, after all the suffering of the 'slaves', the Super-Man has arrived, what then? Nietzsche is by no means clear. His idea of Eternal Recurrence rather suggests that the Super-Men will gradually degenerate into ordinary men, and the whole senseless process will have to be repeated again and again to all eternity. The only thing to be said about such a world is that it is mad.

Nietzsche has, even if unwittingly, contributed to the moral degeneration of modern Germany. True, many of his ideas were the precise antithesis of Nazi ideas. He hated narrow nationalism like poison. He scorned anti-Semitism. He longed for the United States of Europe. He even had a poor opinion of Germany and condemned the career of conquest upon which it embarked in the sixties of the last century. 'It seems to me', he wrote in 1887, 'that Germany for the last fifteen years has become a regular school of besotment. Water, rubbish, and filth, far and wide—that is what it looks like from a distance. I beg a thousand pardons if I have hurt your noble feelings in speaking in this way, but for present-day Germany, however much it may bristle, hedge-hog-like, with arms, I no longer have any respect. It represents the stupidest, most depraved, and most mendacious form of the German spirit that has ever existed—and what absurdities has not this spirit dared to perpetrate!'<sup>1</sup> Yet his doctrines made for violence and war. His adoration of Napoleon, his belief in war as a biological necessity, his enthronement of the will for power, his idea of master

<sup>1</sup> Quotation from *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche* in *The Times Literary Supplement*. (Cutting accidentally left undated.)

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and slave races, his interdiction of pity, and the blessing he pronounced on utter ruthlessness, have borne their natural and inevitable fruit in Nazi-ism. That fruit is so bitter to the taste that the philosophical tree on which it grew stands condemned in the judgment of mankind. The difference between the Christian and the Nietzschean ethic is the difference between heaven and hell. As James Ward wrote in 1912: 'I do not think the growing Nietzsche cult will last long or in the end do harm. If the terrible experiment must be made we may safely anticipate the result: it will be Hobbes' state of nature over again; till the world retraces its steps.'<sup>1</sup>

#### (g) THE FINALITY OF THE ETHICS OF JESUS

It is sometimes insisted that there can be no finality in an ethical ideal proclaimed to the world nearly two thousand years ago, and that just as often in human history old ethical systems have been superseded and new ethical insight gained, so the ethical ideal of Jesus will one day be superseded by one still loftier, one that more nearly approaches perfection. When all religious and dogmatic considerations are left out of account and the question is viewed in the light of reason and history only, there seems to be some justice in such a plea.

It is obvious that the idea of evolution is, in the main, responsible for the theory that the ethical ideal of Jesus may some day be surpassed. But the biological conception of evolution—a continuous and progressive change according to certain laws by means of resident forces—is not applicable in the field of Ethics, for ethical ideas do not evolve as living things do. Ethical development is not just a question of time, as though given the necessary time ethical perfection would be attained. Ethical progress is not in any way automatic, it depends on *insight* rather than on time.

<sup>1</sup> *The Realm of Ends*, p. 451.



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The ethical ideas of the modern world are not to be regarded as the highest and the most advanced on the road to perfection because they happen to be the latest. The highest ethical ideas emerge from the highest ethical insight, from the great Masters of the Moral Life, and there is no *a priori* ground for denying that the Supreme Master of the Moral Life has already appeared on the stage of history. In this matter Ethics does not stand alone. In the realm of music, it could hardly be maintained that modern jazz is superior to Beethoven's Symphonies because it is more recent by a century. Modern Art is not necessarily superior to that of any bygone age simply because it is later. The sculpture of Pheidias in the fourth century B.C. reached such a pitch of perfection that it has never been surpassed. '“Beyond Pheidias”, said Rodin, “art can never go”. Beyond Jesus of Nazareth, we may add, the moral stature of humanity can never go.’<sup>1</sup>

Further, there is the very stubborn fact that all the labours of all the moral philosophers of all nations and of all ages have not succeeded in presenting to mankind an ethical ideal which equals, let alone transcends, that of Jesus. The ethical ideal proclaimed to-day in the name of science does no more than re-echo some (by no means all) of the high ethical notes struck by Jesus—it registers no advance, not even by so much as a hair's breadth! Thus the utmost that science can do in shaping an ethical ideal for men is merely to repeat a small fraction of what Jesus taught in Galilee centuries ago. When the question of influence on the ethical life of mankind is at issue, where is the peer of Jesus to be found? Where even is anybody who could be designated a runner-up? As Wittegen pointed out: 'Since Christ came into the world, there has no longer been a world without Christ; He entered into it like dye, the stain of which no amount of washing will remove; like a drop of God's blood which remains ineffaceably there.'<sup>2</sup>

There is, therefore, nothing impossible in the idea that in Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Dean Inge, *op. cit.* p. 191.    <sup>2</sup> Quoted by James Reid, *Why be Good?* p. 72.



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of Nazareth Ethics reaches its climax and crown, so that any higher ethical ideal cannot, either now or at any future time, be conceived by the mind of man. 'The ideal as apprehended and defined by Jesus does not admit of improvement or advance. It is either false or it is final.'<sup>1</sup> So there is nothing unreasonable in the Christian contention that Jesus of Nazareth is the Moral Leader, the Moral Pioneer of mankind, the unique Master of the Art of Living, the supreme Moral Reality of the Universe, the Last Word on all the great issues of right and wrong. As Erasmus said: He is 'the only archetype, from which if anyone swerve by a nail's breadth he goes astray and runs outside the way.'<sup>2</sup> 'I bow before Christ', exclaimed Goethe, 'as the divine manifestation of the highest principle of morality.'<sup>3</sup>

The disciples of John the Baptist once put to Jesus the question: 'Art thou the One who should come or are we to look for another?' This question raises the supreme issue for every man and all the world to-day. By what star is man to steer his course? Whom is he to regard as his guide in the conduct of personal life and in the shaping and fashioning of the life of society? Jesus Christ or Another? 'There are amongst men sublime types of noble endeavour and deed. History knows moral facts to which we look up with admiration. But in the whole history of mankind there is only one, Jesus, in whom God and God's holy will touches us directly and without limit. We feel that in this Person the will of God amongst men is truly realised.'<sup>4</sup> That is true, and it is no less true that 'Christianity carries the fortunes of mankind, and its failure would be nothing less calamitous than the spiritual suicide of humanity.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B. H. Streeter, *Reality*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Enchiridion*, xiv, 1. (Quoted by McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. II, p. 387.)

<sup>3</sup> See *H.J.*, October 1931, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Feine, *op. cit.* p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> Hensley Henson, *op. cit.* p. 31.

## CHAPTER VI

### PAUL AS AN ETHICAL TEACHER

#### (a) HIS ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR MANKIND

As the first and greatest interpreter of Christ and as the outstanding missionary of the Early Church, it was Paul of Tarsus who, more than anybody else, introduced the leaven of the ethical teaching of Jesus into European society and thus helped to lay the foundations of what we commonly call Christian civilisation. That fact alone makes him a figure of unique importance in the history of the world. True, he was not the first Christian to set foot on European soil, for the Church at Rome was founded while he was still working in Asia, yet it was an epoch-making event when, in A.D. 50, he crossed the Aegean Sea into Macedonia and there founded a little community of Christian people who were destined to become 'blameless and guileless, faultless children of God in a crooked and perverse generation, where you shine like stars in a dark world' (Phil. ii. 15). Shortly afterwards there were people in Corinth who underwent a similar moral transformation: 'Neither the immoral, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor catamites, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the insatiable, nor the drunken, nor the abusive, nor the rapacious will inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you, but you washed yourselves clean, but you were consecrated, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. vi. 9 f.). Such moral triumphs as these proved but an earnest of those that were to follow. It is undeniable and almost undenied that Christianity has been the mightiest moral lever ever applied to human affairs, and it is no small part of Paul's life-achievement that it was mainly through his vision

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and understanding and his tireless missionary zeal that Christianity began to play its proper part in the life of the world.

Professor Gilbert Murray admits that Paul ranks as 'one of the great figures in Greek literature.'<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz-Möllendorf describes him as 'ein Klassiker des Hellenismus.'<sup>2</sup> And another classical scholar writes: 'Paul stands among the greatest of the Greeks. It might surprise him to find himself so placed; they too might be surprised; but who of them, apart from Homer and Plato, has had so wide and so long an influence, who has opened up more of the real world to men, whose words have lived more in the hearts of their readers?'<sup>3</sup> But though Paul wrote Greek and spoke Greek, it was not to Hellenism that he was indebted for his ethical ideas. He made his great contribution to the ethical thought and practice of mankind not as a Hellenist but as a Jew and above all as a Christian.

### (b) THE NATURE OF HIS ETHICS

#### (1). *Non-systematic.*

Paul is not to be regarded in any sense as an ethical philosopher, for he entered into no discussion of ethical theories. Nor was he an ethical pioneer, for he did not create a new Christian ideal or a new Christian social ethic—he simply passed on to others what he had received. He did not think in terms of a morally organised world or of an ethical culture. He gave no instructions as to the part that the Christian should play in the re-organisation of the life of society. He did not conceive of an ethic that was to flow in full stream through public life and to influence the shaping and fashioning of social institutions, of the State, and of international relations—that is a modern conception, which did not and could

<sup>1</sup> *Four Stages in Greek Religion*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Weinelt, *Die urchristliche und die heutige Mission*, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> T. R. Glover, *Paul of Tarsus*, p. 1.

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not occur to Paul in view of his conviction that the end of the world was at hand. But his ethics must not on that account be regarded as 'Interim-ethics', for with the exception of his teaching about marriage and, perhaps, his attitude to slavery, his ethical ideas were not affected by his eschatology, but set forth what he conceived to be the eternal will of God and the mind of Christ.

His ethical interest was purely practical. He was peculiarly sensitive on all ethical issues, and had that 'moral genius' which has already been referred to as one of the characteristics of what may be termed the classical type of Christian. He was concerned simply and solely with the results in character and conduct of that faith-union with God in Christ which was for him the central feature of Christian experience. His ethical teaching is to be found in his correspondence with churches. These letters were genuine *letters*, not treatises or essays or even 'epistles'—for an epistle is, strictly speaking, a literary work of art intended for a much wider public than the person or persons to whom it is addressed; and Paul's letters are not works of art, and they had nobody in view but the people to whom they were sent. Had anyone told the apostle that his letters would one day be bound up with the Old Testament and the Gospels and be regarded as 'Scripture', he would have been horrified at the idea and would have denounced it as blasphemous. The very fact that his ethical teaching is contained in this occasional correspondence of a missionary enhances its value, for it is a guarantee that there is no posing, no thought of the general public or of posterity. In these letters we see exactly and precisely how he actually thought and felt on ethical questions. The structure of his letters is more or less uniform—religious teaching and the discussion of the questions that occasioned the letter are always followed by ethical teaching, so that all the letters wind up on a strong ethical note. In the letter to the Romans, for example, eleven chapters are devoted to doctrinal discussion, and

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ethical exhortation begins with chapter xii. The ethical significance of religious doctrines is always driven home. After pointing out to the Corinthians that Christians have been redeemed, bought with a price, he draws the conclusion that their bodies are, therefore, not at their own disposal for immoral purposes, but belong to God and should be used to His glory (1 Cor. vi. 20). After devoting fifty-seven verses to an exposition of the problem of the resurrection, he adds a final verse which states the ethical inference: 'Wherefore, my beloved brothers, prove steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. xv. 58). As has been truly said, Paul does not hesitate to use a steam hammer to crack a nut. When he wishes to incite the Corinthians to contribute generously to his collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he appeals to Christ being rich and for our sakes becoming poor (2 Cor. viii. 9). In order to inspire the Philippians to lowliness of mind and mutual consideration, he directs their thoughts to the example of Christ Who, though He was divine by nature, emptied Himself by taking the nature of a servant, by being born in human guise and appearing in human form (Phil. ii. 6 f.). The 'strong', who were all too prone to consider merely their own opinions and predilections and to trample roughshod on the feelings of those not as enlightened as themselves, the 'weak', were urged to remember that 'Christ pleased not Himself' (Rom. xv. 3). So the apostle passes from religion to ethics and ethics to religion, out of the recognition that they form one indissoluble whole.

Another symptom of the unsystematic nature of Paul's ethics is its detailed character. In striking contrast to Jesus, Who, for the most part, stated a few ethical principles and left His hearers to draw the appropriate inferences, the apostle goes into great detail and seeks to make explicit *all* that is implicit in the Christian ideal. His experience of his converts made it clear to him that a wide

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gulf often yawned between the Christian ideal and the actual state of the Christian. Though he taught that the Spirit of God in action in a man's heart was an adequate ethical guide, and that a man under the sway of the Spirit knew from within what the will of God was and was enabled both to will and to do it, he recognised that few Christians were mature (τέλειοι) and that the majority were babes (νήπιοι). Hence he does not leave his readers to draw the ethical inferences for themselves but points them out. Even in his own case, he admitted that Christian perfection was the goal of his aspiration and endeavour rather than an actual achievement (Phil. iii. 12 f.). If, as he maintained, the Christian is 'dead to sin', and 'alive to God', and through the gift of the Spirit has gained clear moral insight and the power to do the good he knows, all ethical exhortation was superfluous. But while his theories were ideally true, he found that as a matter of fact certain pagan ideas and practices often clung to his converts after they became Christians. Thus he found it necessary to explain in great detail what the Christian ideal really was. In his letters there are scores of ethical exhortations dealing with matters that should be obvious to the Christian—even including so elementary an ethical law as 'Let the stealer steal no more.' These exhortations sometimes gush forth like water from a spring, and are as unrelated to one another as the maxims of the Book of Proverbs (e.g. Rom. xii. and 1 Thess. v.).

### *(2). Non-ascetic.*

There are certain ascetic features in Paul, yet he was no ascetic. He was celibate and wished that everybody else was: 'I would that all men were as even I myself am [unmarried]' (1 Cor. vii. 1), an amazing thing for anyone to say, from our point of view, for if his wish had been realised the human race would long ago have committed suicide; but, of course, from the apostle's point of view, the human race had no future, for he believed that the

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end of the world was imminent. Yet the motive behind his celibacy was non-ascetic. The idea advanced by some modern writers that sex had become sinful in Christian circles certainly finds no support in Paul. He freely concedes that there is no sin in marriage or in sexual intercourse within marriage. 'Now if you are actually married, there is no sin in that; and if a girl gets married, there is no sin in that' (1 Cor. vii. 28). So far as he himself was concerned, he was probably influenced not a little by the word of Jesus about being a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God (Matt. xix. 12), for just as Jesus adds: 'He that is able to accept such an idea, let him accept it', so Paul adds to his remark about celibacy: 'Each man has his own peculiar gift from God, one man in one way, and another man in another.' What he means is that he had received a spiritual gift (*χάρισμα*) which enabled him without any moral risk to renounce marriage and to dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Kingdom of God, and he recognised that such a spiritual gift was not given to everybody. He was a celibate for the Kingdom of God's sake and, therefore, his celibacy was non-ascetic. His motive in urging celibacy on others was not the suspicion that marriage was unclean, but the desire that, in view of the rapid approach of the end of the world and the woes inseparable from that cataclysmic event, people should be spared the burden of family responsibilities: (Cf. 'Woe to those who are with child and to those that give suck in those days!' Mark xiii. 17). Further, he was convinced that at such a critical time men and women should be perfectly free to devote themselves to the affairs of the Lord, and was of the opinion that only the unmarried could enjoy such freedom.

His indifference to worldly possessions was ascetic in appearance but not in reality. For one thing, his belief in the imminent end of the world made earthly goods of trivial importance in his eyes: 'Let those who buy goods be as if they did not possess them, let those who mix in the world be as people not absorbed in it, for

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the present phase of things is passing away' (1 Cor. vii. 30 f.). Then, too, he so valued his spiritual possessions that material things counted very little with him: 'As poor, but making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things' (2 Cor. vi. 10). But he had no contempt for the good things of this world. As a Jew, he would necessarily regard creation as good, as the handiwork of God; and he would regard the satisfaction of his temporal needs as the gift of God's providence. 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof' (1 Cor. x. 26). He was grateful for the material assistance that reached him from his friends at Philippi (Phil. iv. 10 f.), though he declared that he had no complaint about want, for his interior spiritual resources were such that whether he had plenty or went hungry, enjoyed prosperity or suffered privation, he was contented (*αὐτάρκης*, lit., 'self-sufficing').

His essentially non-ascetic attitude comes out in various ways. In a manner reminiscent of the teaching of our Lord in Mark vii., he speaks of food as morally and spiritually indifferent, for when dealing with the question as to whether it was permissible for Christians to buy in the public market meat that had been slaughtered in heathen sacrifices (*εἰδωλόθυτα*), or even to eat such meat when they were dining with friends, he says: 'Food will not bring us into God's presence. We suffer no disadvantage if we do not eat, nor have we any advantage if we do eat' (1 Cor. viii. 8). So also when he discusses the ascetic practices in regard to diet (abstinence from meat and wine), which had arisen in the Church at Rome, he declares: 'I know and am convinced in the Lord that no food is of itself profane, but if a man regards a certain food as profane to him it is profane' (Rom. xiv. 14). He definitely discourages asceticism at Colosse. The passage is somewhat obscure, and the correct translation a matter of dispute, but it can best be rendered thus: 'Why, as though you were living your life in the world (i.e. not as Christians) do you subject yourselves to rules and regulations: "Don't handle this", "And don't taste that",



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“And don’t touch the other” (things which are all destined to perish in their use), according to mere human precepts and doctrines? For practices of this sort, though they have the repute of wisdom as self-imposed worship (*ἐθελοθρησκεία*) and humility and bodily discipline, are of no value (substituting *ἐντίμη* for *ἐν τιμῇ*) to anybody as a cure for (*πρός*) the indulgence of the flesh’ (ii. 20 ff.)—and many a monk has since learned in bitter experience that the apostle’s contention here is perfectly true. A more definite repudiation of the ascetic idea could hardly be conceived. Most striking of all is his recognition that it was quite impossible for the Christians of Corinth to avoid all contact with shady characters—‘otherwise, of course, you would have to go out of the world altogether!’ (1 Cor. v. 10). But Paul does *not* advise flight from this wicked world; on the contrary, the Christian is to play his part right manfully in it.

At the same time, like His Master (see Chapter VI (a)), Paul does recognise the urgent need of the most rigorous self-discipline, and in that sense of the term he was ascetic. ‘Now every athlete practises all-round self-mastery. But while they do it that they may gain a perishable garland, we do it to gain an imperishable one. I, therefore, run without any uncertainty as to the goal (*οὐκ ἀδήλως*), and I box in such a way that I do not beat the air, on the contrary, I beat my body black and blue and make a slave of it, lest perchance after having summoned other people to the Christian race I should be disqualified myself’ (1 Cor. ix. 25 ff.). The need of strict self-discipline in the Christian life is here urged in a vivid and arresting way.

The fact remains, however, that Paul was concerned not with flight from the world, but with overcoming the world by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God. His ethic was realistic and far removed from the futilities of eremitism and monasticism. His passion was not to avoid contact with the world but to lead it back to God.

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### (3). *Non-legalistic.*

As was pointed out above (p. 69), it is sometimes claimed that the main contribution of modern Humanism to the ethical life of man is the substitution of internal for external controls. It is rather late in the day to see an innovation in such a principle as that, and in the light of the witness of the New Testament it is strange that any such claim should be advanced. It may be that only careful study of the teaching of Jesus reveals that He internalised morality, but in the case of Paul that fact lies on the surface, for with unwearying and almost tiresome insistence he is constantly inveighing against the idea that any law or code (i.e. any external control), even though it be what he devoutly regarded as the divinely given Law of the Old Testament, is adequate to the ethical needs of man. The question at issue here is no mere historical question of the dead past but one of the paramount concerns of the living present. So far as the root principle involved is concerned, we have had a recent and most tragic illustration of the fact that no law or code, no external control, can solve problems of conduct. A quarter of a century ago the problem of the conduct of nations in their dealings with one another was solved *on paper* in the Covenant of the League of Nations, but the problem, alas! was not solved *in men's hearts*, so that the code proved impotent to prevent another world-war. It is beyond the wit or wisdom of any body of men to devise any pact or covenant or charter which will be a sure and certain preventive of war. Then are all such labours futile? Not at all. It is an excellent thing clearly to define how nations *ought* to behave, but to suppose that when that is done nations *will* necessarily behave as they ought, and as they have solemnly undertaken to do, is to dwell in a fool's paradise. By all means let us have sign-posts to show us the way we ought to take, but we must never foolishly assume that sign-posts will take us to our destination. There can be no certainty of permanent peace until the hearts of men everywhere are full of good-

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will towards all mankind—and then pacts and covenants and charters can be scrapped, excepting, of course, in so far as they lay down methods of procedure for the pacific solution of international differences.

What so obviously applies to the conduct of nations applies no less to the conduct of individuals. No law against murder can ever absolutely prevent one man from killing another—in spite of the gallows in the offing. No legal penalties for adultery can completely abolish illicit sexual relations. No police-court procedure against theft can put a full-stop to larceny. Similarly no law, however excellent in itself, can ever make a man a good man—and that, in a nutshell, is the gravamen of Paul's indictment of 'law'. The law he had in mind was, of course, the Old Testament Law, but what he says about that applies to all law, for no code of rules can create virtue. In his attacks on the Law, he was not thinking of the Law's content—that he approved, as 'holy and righteous and good' (Rom. vii. 12), and, as a devout Jew, he inevitably regarded it as having been given by God to man. What he attacked was the idea that any code was equal to the task of building noble character. Morality, he insisted, was not a matter of mere rules and regulations. The real human tragedy was not ignorance of the right and the good, but apparent impotence to do it. A code can prescribe what a man ought to do, but it cannot dispose him to do it. A code merely issues orders and seeks to regulate conduct from the outside, but it leaves the inner thoughts and desires and feelings of men—the real springs of conduct—untouched, for it is useless to issue commands to men as to what they are to think and desire and feel. Hence Paul insisted that some new method, different from the code-method, 'independent of any law' (Rom. iii. 21), was required. Goodness, he held, was not something that men achieve for themselves, but was the gift of God's grace. The new method is the Spirit-method. When a man, however sinful he may be, commits himself to God in Christ, that is, to the

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revelation of the love of God for the undeserving made manifest in Christ, God, through His Spirit, enters into action in that man's heart, with the result that his inner nature and disposition are transformed, and he becomes inwardly disposed to do the will of God, not because it is prescribed but because out of a good heart he has voluntarily and gladly embraced it as the law of his own life. His inner thoughts and feelings and desires undergo so profound a change that his whole personality is set on the doing of God's will. There is a Power not his own at work in his inner life. Thus Paul's thought is, at root, somewhat akin to the Kantian idea: 'A principle of conduct is morally binding on me only if I can regard it as a law which I impose on myself.' The truth in Kant's dictum is that a principle of conduct has no moral value unless it is freely accepted, and for that purpose there must be a good disposition and a good will. Now it is precisely on the necessity of a good disposition and a good will that Paul's stress is laid, and he regards a good disposition and a good will as the gift of God, a result of God entering into action in a man's heart, and that again is a result of a man's self-committal to God as He is revealed in Christ. Anybody who has grasped this line of thought can see the inner meaning of such great Pauline utterances as these: 'The life I now live in the flesh I live in faith (i.e. self-committal), faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. ii. 20); 'that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God by faith' (Phil. iii. 9).

Paul recognised that the Law, i.e., the code-method, had a certain value. For one thing, it presented men with a high ideal of conduct—a matter of supreme importance, especially for the ethical development of the immature. Its function in that respect, however, he regarded as subordinate and transitory. It was just a tutor (*παιδαγωγός*) to take men to Christ. When they ceased to

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be mere moral minors and had attained their moral majority, they no longer needed a tutor. 'So the law has been a tutor to take us to Christ, so that we might have righteousness by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor' (Gal. iii. 25). Further, the Law had value in that it brought home to men their real condition; it served as a mirror to reflect their moral defects and incompetence—for it held up before them an ideal which they were obliged to confess that they were unable to reach. This sad truth about themselves would never have come home to them but for their conscious failure to live up to an ideal which they recognised to be the true end of their life. As Paul pointed out, the Law produced the sense of sin, and nothing but the sense of sin could lead men to humility towards God. Here his thought was in line with that of Jesus Who, as we have seen, regarded self-complacency and self-satisfaction as a bar to all moral and spiritual advance, and insisted that there was not much hope for a man until out of his heart he cried 'God be merciful to me, sinner that I am.' So Paul held that it was only when a man felt that if ever he was to be a good man it would be by God's good grace and not by his own unaided efforts that he was ready for that self-surrender to God which is designated 'faith'.

The failure of the code-method was not simply that it issued commands without supplying the power to keep them, for even if a man kept the letter of the law, his inward condition might leave much to be desired. Worse still, even if a man fulfilled the Law in both the letter and the spirit, he would inevitably preen himself in his achievement, he would be able to 'boast' before God (cf. the Pharisee's prayer: I thank thee, God, that I am not as other men are), with the result that lack of humility would vitiate his whole life. Virtue loses its lustre whenever it is proud of itself, and unless a man can say in all sincerity, 'By the grace of God I am what I am', moral and spiritual pride will be his besetting sin. Hence the Apostle's constant insistence that all 'boasting' is of

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necessity excluded from the good life, and the good man's attitude is one of profound humility. 'Legal' righteousness is always corrupted with the self-complacency of the prig. Strangely enough, H. G. Wells comes very near to Paul's thought at this point: 'The benevolent atheist stands alone upon his own good will, without a reference, without a standard, trusting to his own impulse to goodness, relying on his own moral strength. A certain immodesty, a certain self-righteousness hangs like a precipice above him; incalculable temptations open like gulfs beneath his feet. He has not really given himself or got away from himself. He has no-one to whom he can give himself. He is still a master-less man. His exaltation is self-centred, is priggish.'<sup>1</sup> All that Wells there says about the 'benevolent atheist', Paul thought about the man who attained (or thought he had attained) righteousness by his own obedience to the Law rather than by giving himself to God.

So, then, Paul insisted that for the Christian the code-method is no more, and the spirit-method has taken its place. As Holsten says: 'Paul did not shrink from drawing the inference that the Law is abolished, not only as the principle of salvation but also as the principle of conduct.'<sup>2</sup> The Christian is dead to the Law (Rom. vii. 4). 'But now we are discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held down, so that we serve in the new way of the spirit, and not in the old way of the letter' (Rom. vii. 6). 'Christ is the end of law, with a view to righteousness for everyone who believes' (Rom. x. 4). To seek righteousness through the Law is 'to be done with Christ, to fall from grace' (Gal. v. 4).

It is important to note that Paul regarded the code-method as superseded by the spirit-method not merely in the case of Gentiles but also in the case of the Jews. God does not adopt two methods—a spirit-method for Gentiles and a code-method for

<sup>1</sup> *The Invisible King*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Holtzmann, *N.T. Theologie*, II, p. 159.

Jews. He deals with man as man and not as Jew or Gentile. He is the God of mankind and has instituted the same method for all. 'Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Since God is one, He will justify the Jews (lit. the circumcision) by faith and the Gentiles (lit. the uncircumcision) by faith' (Rom. iii. 29 f.). He attributes the failure of the Jews to accept the Gospel to the fact that while they have a zeal for God, that zeal is not according to knowledge, and consequently they seek to establish a righteousness of their own instead of receiving righteousness from God by self-committal to Him (Rom. x. 2 f.).

It was this attack on the code-method, the Law, that was responsible for the bitter opposition offered by the Jews to Paul. He maintained that their sacred Law, both in its moral (e.g. the Decalogue) and ceremonial aspects was now superseded. To attack the Law was to attack the most sacred institution of Jewish life, 'the embodiment of true knowledge' (Rom. ii. 20). And since the Jew regarded the Law as a divinely given code for the regulation of thought and conduct and life, he was almost bound to conclude that the Apostle was undermining morality itself. No more need of the Ten Commandments! He felt towards Paul as a devout Mohammedan would feel towards some Moslem renegade who attacked the Koran.

Paul's whole case is summed up in that wonderful word: 'For the Code (*τὸ γράμμα*) kills, but the Spirit makes alive' (2 Cor. iii. 6). As Deissmann has said: 'The writer of these lines deserves immortality.'<sup>1</sup> Paul here insists that Christianity is not a Code (an external control), but a 'Spirit', (an internal control). The Jewish Code is external, harsh, and merely says 'Thou shalt' or 'Thou shalt not'. It consists of a long series of rules and regulations. It cannot release man's higher moral and spiritual powers and thus secure obedience to itself, while at the same time it threatens

<sup>1</sup> *Paulus*, p. 42.



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punishment for disobedience and so 'kills'. Further, it often drives men into opposition to itself. 'I should not have had any knowledge of sin but for the law: for I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said: Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking advantage of that which was ordered by the law, led to all kinds of covetousness in me' (Rom. vii. 14). Here the Apostle seizes on one of the most curious features of human nature—the desire to do what is forbidden. As Mary Webb says in *Precious Bane*: 'Gainsay, and the blood's on fire', and anybody familiar with the vagaries of human conduct and especially with the ways of young people, could give scores of illustrations. But when a man commits himself to God in Christ, his spirit comes under the sway of the Divine Spirit, and that Spirit is the source and spring of a new life at work in his heart. Through the Spirit a man is gripped by a Divine power, so that his disposition is changed and he wills increasingly what God wills. The Spirit works inwardly, and from the Spirit as *one root* (contrast the countless demands of the Law), Christian virtues spontaneously grow (cf. Gal. v. 22). The Spirit is thus a living and life-giving principle which drives men ever forward in the moral and spiritual life, lifting them out of and beyond themselves. Instead of merely saying 'Thou shalt', the Spirit, as it were, says: 'Thou canst, for I will enable thee.' Thus the Spirit quickens, makes alive.

When Paul abandoned the Code-method for the Spirit-method, he could fairly reply to his critics that though he had scrapped the Ten Commandments and all the rest of the Law, yet morality was perfectly safe, for the man who is under the Spirit's sway will inevitably and spontaneously produce the fruits of the Spirit, and as Schleiermacher so finely said: 'The fruits of the Spirit are the virtues of Christ.' Thus morality was not merely safe, in spite of the abolition of the Law, it was infinitely safer under the Spirit régime than the Jewish or any other code could ever make it.

Thus Paul, like Jesus, found the secret of the good life in a good



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nature, a good disposition; and the secret of a good disposition in the sway of the Spirit of God over the inner life of man. Hence, whatever the formal differences may be, the essence of his teaching is in harmony with that of Jesus, and in line with the New Covenant idea of Jeremiah: 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.' External controls are off, and internal controls are on.

It is true that Paul occasionally lapsed into legal language, though never into legalism. He occasionally spoke of a law that is binding on the Christian, and of an external moral standard. But no ethical religion can completely forego the idea of divine will and command. When he said that in his dealings with those who were 'without law' (i.e. with Gentiles) he accommodated himself by being 'without law', he swiftly added 'not being without law to God, but under law to Christ' (1 Cor. ix. 21). He extolled the love of God and neighbour as the substance of the Law (Rom. xiii. 8). He regarded any word of Jesus as a 'law' binding on the Christian: 'Unto the married I give charge, yea, not I but the Lord' (1 Cor. vii. 10). He appealed to Christ's law: 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal. vi. 2). He spoke of Christian living as a process of *obedience*, 'bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. x. 5). By a curious oxymoron he even referred to 'the law of the spirit'—though here *νόμος* probably means 'principle', and the passage should be rendered: 'the spiritual principle of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the principle of sin and of death' (Rom. viii. 2). Such language indicates that Paul had not completely abandoned his earlier Jewish modes of thought. He was partly accommodating his teaching to the Old Testament standpoint and to Jewish ideas, and in part he was revealing his recognition that the Old Law and the New Morality both had their source in God—that the God who gave the Law on Sinai had also given the Spirit as an active living power in the inner life of the

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Christian, paralysing the 'flesh' and slaying 'sin', so that 'flesh' and 'sin' could now be overcome and the will of God fulfilled (Rom. viii. 4), that the God who established the Old Covenant had now established the New.

In any case, there is nothing of the old legality involved in Paul's occasional legal language. He conceives of the Christian as fulfilling the law of God *freely* and not in a spirit of slavish obedience.

The Spirit brings man power to do the will of God, while a mere code is powerless. The Spirit is a source of moral insight vastly superior to the Law. The Jew learned the difference between right and wrong by a careful study of the Mosaic Law. The Christian, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit, gains a fine moral feeling (*αἰσθησις*)—'My prayer for you is this—that your love may be more and more rich in knowledge and in all fine moral feeling' (Phil. i. 9)—and is thus able inwardly to perceive what the will of God is—'the good, the morally satisfying, the ideal' (Rom. xii. 2).

That there were those in the Gentile world who fully grasped the anti-legal teaching of the Apostle is clear from Aristides' Apology, for though the general tendency of the Apologists of the second century was to regard Christianity as a *nova lex*, yet one sentence of Aristides reveals a deeper insight into its nature; for, speaking of Christians, he says: 'They have the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, engraven upon their hearts.' For them, at least, external controls had been superseded by internal controls.

### (c) THE FUSION OF RELIGION AND ETHICS IN PAUL'S TEACHING

Like his Master, Paul could not conceive either of unethical religion or of unreligious ethics. He would have agreed with

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Brunner's dictum: 'Only ethical religion is truly religious, and only religious ethics is really ethical.'<sup>1</sup> The taunt that religion has often been (and sometimes still is) unethical, Paul would have met with the categorical denial that such religion was genuine religion; he would have dismissed an unethical religion as 'a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' (χαλκὸς ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλάζον). The plea that men are sometimes ethical without being religious, he would have answered by declaring that such men have the law of God written on their hearts and that they instinctively obey that law's requirements. Such is the significance of that great saying of his: 'For whenever the Gentiles who have no Law (i.e. no Jewish Law) by natural impulse (φύσει) do what the Law requires, they, though they have no Law, are a law to themselves; seeing that they show the effect of the Law written on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their inmost thoughts accusing them or, perhaps, defending them' (Rom. ii. 14 f.). Here Paul strikes at Jewish pride which was all too apt to regard Gentiles as capable only of things base and evil because they had no Law like that of the Jews, and he expresses a thought akin to the Stoic idea of a moral sense as native to men. He claims, in effect, that the reason why some men who are not consciously religious are nevertheless ethical is that they are aware of a categorical imperative, that they have a knowledge of the eternal principles of right and wrong written on their hearts, and feel a moral obligation to do the right and to eschew the wrong. Paul's essential thought is well expressed in Browning's lines:

*Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast  
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:  
Though He is so bright and we so dim,  
We are made in His image to witness Him.*<sup>2</sup>

So, then, according to Paul, wherever there is a worthy ethical

<sup>1</sup> *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> 'Christmas Eve', XVII.

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life there is a religion of some sort, conscious or unconscious, at the back of it; virtue is rooted in piety (and any man who seriously acknowledges moral obligations is, in a sense, pious), in God. That Paul fused religion and ethics into one indissoluble whole is clear from all his teaching, but there are two passages in which he deals specifically with this problem, namely, Rom. i. 28 and 1 Cor. xv. 32.

Paul saw the root of all wickedness in irreligion. After describing the appalling moral conditions which he found in the Graeco-Roman world, he says: 'And as they refused to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do such things as are not fitting' (Rom. i. 28). It is sometimes alleged that Paul's description of the moral state of the world around him is hardly fair. It would certainly be unfair if it necessarily implied that *all* Gentiles lived in the moral cesspool which he portrayed, but that was something which Paul assuredly did not believe, as the passage just considered (Rom. ii. 14 f.) makes clear. One has merely to read Suetonius' *Lives of the Emperors* to find ample proof that all the moral evils to which Paul refers, even the foulest and the filthiest, were rampant in imperial circles, and they can hardly have been non-existent lower down the social scale. Paul is describing a state of affairs which he found actually existent in the Gentile world, but he never intended his remarks to be applied to every individual Gentile. He had had no contact with Greek philosophers, but he can hardly have been unaware of the fact that there were teachers in the Gentile world who, both morally and religiously, were far ahead of the rank and file. He certainly knew something of the religion and ethics of the Stoics—as was natural enough for one brought up in the university city of Tarsus. But Paul found monstrous moral evils in the world around him and attributed them to irreligion—drawing the inference that where there is no religion, conscious or unconscious, there is no morality.

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Such an inference is false only when it is taken to mean that no individual can be ethical unless he makes profession of religion; but as a description of a general tendency it is perfectly sound. On the whole, the experience of mankind is on the Apostle's side, for religious declension brings—sooner or later—moral disintegration and decay in its train. As Tolstoi recognised, morality is 'the ever-present guide to life' resulting from religion.<sup>1</sup> As a general rule, when religion is undermined, morality is undermined too. The Apostle's view that the moral degeneracy of the contemporary world was due to its irreligion is based on facts. 'It is certain that the moral sense was growing weaker, and this was fully recognised by the more earnest minds of the time. The chief cause of this decline was the falling away of the old religious sanctions. In that enlightened age it was no longer possible to believe the ancient myths. Educated men had learned to treat them as a matter of jest, and this sceptical attitude was now shared by the people at large. Augustus, himself a man of very free opinions, had perceived that the decay of religion would soon undermine the moral foundations of society. He devoted himself in his later years to the task of vitalising the old Roman religion, and for this purpose built innumerable temples, and enlisted in his crusade the great poets and artists of the day.'<sup>2</sup> That Paul should have expressed himself as he did was quite natural for a devout Jew, because, as Dean Matthews says: 'The Hebrew consciousness of God is a meditation upon righteousness. It pushes to the furthest point the conception of Deity as the Vindicator of moral values.'<sup>3</sup> Consequently the apostle inevitably believed that people who refused to acknowledge God had no basis for morality. In spite of all the protests that are being raised to-day against such an idea, the facts of experience support the apostle. For as

<sup>1</sup> *Maude's Life*, II, p. 499.

<sup>2</sup> E. F. Scott, *The First Age of Christianity*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, p. 40.

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Martineau said: 'Though the decay of religion may leave the institutes of morality intact, it drains off their inward power.'<sup>1</sup> The unsuccessful attempts of the various kinds of modern Humanism to bolster up morality without religion (in any historic sense of the term), bear witness to the truth of Paul's contention. The present world-crisis is a demonstration of the close connection between religion and morality. It is the decay of religion which is responsible for the moral bankruptcy which characterises large sections of human society, for that veritable apocalypse of evil through which we have been living for the last few years, and for the inability of statesmen to find any other foundation for the structure of world-security than the shifting sands of self-interest, for in the calculations of most modern statesmen moral and spiritual principles play little or no part, and that is the root-cause of the trouble. Politicians are apt to smile superciliously at the folly of good men who seek to base international intercourse on goodwill, mutual consideration, fidelity, and honourable dealing. But is there any other sure foundation? Without belief in a God who is at the heart of the moral world, the sense of moral values and adherence to moral principles always decline, while moral ideals are always suspected of being the illusions of some Utopian dreamer. The fair flower of a high and noble character—be it that of the man with his hand on the helm of the State or that of the private citizen—always draws its beauty and strength from profound spiritual roots. There is thus ample justification, both on theoretical and experiential grounds, for Paul's thesis that the moral degeneracy of his age was due to its refusal to acknowledge God.

The Apostle deals with essentially the same problem in another way when he says: 'If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die' (1 Cor. xv. 32)—in other words, he holds

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 331; quoted by Henry Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 167.

that the denial of a future life is bound to exercise a disrupting influence on morality. In reply, it is often pointed out that even if the grave ends all, and the final goal of all life is death, beauty would still be better than ugliness and virtue than vice, the social virtues would still be worth cultivating, and it would still be to our advantage to make our life's brief day as decent as possible. Thus, so it is claimed, the loss of all hope of any life hereafter would not necessarily lead to an orgy of self-indulgence and licentiousness. In these contentions there is obviously a good deal of truth, and there are many in our modern world who, though they have no hope of any life beyond death, are nevertheless people of a high moral tone. But such considerations scarcely touch the fringe of the question at issue.

It cannot be denied that, if belief in the certainty of the annihilation of personality at death became the universal conviction of mankind, such a creed would exercise an extraordinarily depressing influence on the moral life of man. All high valuations of human personality, and therefore of ethical experience, would be undermined if everybody believed that 'that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and a man hath no pre-eminence over the beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again' (Eccles. iii. 19 f.). Apart from belief in immortality the Christian valuation of human personality cannot be sustained. As Harnack said: 'Life subject to death is senseless, and only through sophistries can one blind one's eyes to that fact.'<sup>1</sup>

Of all the sophistries that have been advanced to take the sting out of the thought of annihilation, the latest, the most superficial and frivolous, is that of C. H. Waddington: 'If the Mesozoic reptiles had been immortal, man could never have appeared on the scenes. In so far as ethics are taken to be involved in evolution,

<sup>1</sup> *Das Wesen etc.*, p. 40.



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this argument can be carried over from the biological field to the moral; the sacrifice of personality which the individual makes at death can be seen as a contribution to the welfare of the human race.<sup>1</sup> There is no parallelism whatever between the hypothetical physical immortality of Mesozoic reptiles and the Christian belief in the indestructibility of the Spirit of man. The comparison is quite beside the mark. If the Christian view was that man ought to go on living for ever as a physical being in this physical world, a burden to himself and to his fellows by reason of his senility, then the two cases would be parallel. As for the other half of the argument it is still more inept. Can a little child that dies be said to contribute to the welfare of the human race by its sacrifice of personality? When Franklin D. Roosevelt died suddenly at a critical juncture in international affairs, did he contribute to the welfare of the human race by his sacrifice of personality? Did the great host of gallant young men who have recently given their lives on land or sea or in the air for the sake of the liberation of mankind contribute to the welfare of the human race by their sacrifice of personality? They certainly contributed to human welfare by doing what they were doing when they were laid low, but they would have made a much greater contribution to the welfare of the human race if they had not been forced by the insensate folly and madness of German militarism to an untimely 'sacrifice of personality'. If Mr. Waddington's view is correct, then we have to say that even Jesus of Nazareth was completely extinguished at the Crucifixion, but contributed to the welfare of the human race by His sacrifice of personality! The witness of Christian experience is that He was not extinguished, and that He contributes to the welfare of the human race by the inspiration of His Spirit. On that issue, this, at least, can be said, there is no doubt as to which of these views it is that brings the greater stimulus to the ethical life of man. According to Mr. Waddington,

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Ethics*, p. 138.



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therefore, the message of science to everyone of us is: 'Nature will shortly annihilate you, make you as though you had never been at all. But never mind, by this sacrifice of your personality you will contribute to the welfare of the human race.' If this is all they have to say, men of science will have to think again before they can take all the tragedy out of the destruction of the human spirit and make the annihilation of man a less depressing thing from the ethical point of view, for 'we cannot hold to the Christian ethical teaching about personality while rejecting the Christian view about its status in reality.'<sup>1</sup>

If the spirit of man is subject to death, the only inference that can be drawn so far as ethics is concerned is that our moral ideals are after all but idle fancies of our own, completely out of touch with reality. Will any man take moral ideals seriously when once he is convinced of that? Further, if a man believes that all his moral aspirations and endeavours are to end in nothing, will not such a belief exercise a paralysing influence on his ethical life? Noble-minded men will still cultivate decency in order to make life tolerable, but there are multitudes who will find in the brevity of life and in the fancifulness and unreality of all moral ideals an excuse for unlimited self-indulgence of all sorts. The day when every vestige of belief in an after-life vanished from the world would witness a terrific moral and spiritual decadence—'A short life and a merry one' would be the general slogan. 'If we are unable to give our personal life a value which does not succumb to death, then all happiness is a mere transition, an appearance, an intoxication, a dream.'<sup>2</sup>

Socialists and Communists who dismiss the question of a life hereafter as an irrelevance and aim at a purely material paradise, would soon discover, if they realised their dream, that the question is not so irrelevant as they suppose. For if life in this material

<sup>1</sup> J. Baillie, *Invitation to Pilgrimage*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> O. Baltzer, *Im Kampfe um persönliche Religion*, p. 63.

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paradise proved to be the blissful thing they suppose it will be, it would be so hard to leave such bliss behind that the thought of mortality would become bitterer than ever. But would it be blissful? The mere satisfaction of man's economic needs alone, as all human experience testifies, does not bring bliss. What about moral and spiritual values in this material paradise? If they were neglected, the material paradise would soon become a little hell on earth, it would be 'a prey to those poisons of degeneracy which, if we read the lesson of history rightly, are endemic in all secularised societies'.<sup>1</sup> Again, it looks as though Paul was right in his insistence on the connection between disbelief in a life to come and moral degeneracy.

To regard the hope of a life to come as mere wishful thinking is completely to misunderstand the whole issue. The truth is that the reality of ethical (and religious) experience is involved. As Baron von Hügel wrote: 'In a word, it is the convictions of the reality and the spiritual-ethical character of God, of a spiritual-ethical soul in man, and of this soul's relation to that God—the reality of a spiritual-ethical kind, already within this life before the body's death—that are the root of every sane and spiritual apprehension of Eternal Life. And though these convictions involve logically, and in the long run are developed by, the faith in the soul's non-diminished life after the body's death, it is not this faith in survival after death that is the basis of these great convictions, but it is, contrariwise, these great convictions that support and postulate that faith'.<sup>2</sup> If a man rejects all possibility of a future life and yet still retains a high morality, he is forced to accept the paradox that life's moral issues demand his most earnest attention, though all human affairs are so transient that they are scarcely worth any serious consideration at all. As we have already observed, all humanists are impaled on the horns of this dilemma.

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Barry, *The Relevance of Christianity*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Eternal Life*, p. 72.

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If by some inexorable necessity nature is to carry out its sentence of extinction on all things human, the idea of moral obligation shrinks to insignificant proportions and nobody can any longer attach great importance to it. It is quite impossible simultaneously to believe both that the moral claims made upon us are to be taken seriously and that they have no roots in reality, but are illusory and evanescent. As Professor Corkey says: 'If all the worthiest achievements of human effort are inevitably destined ultimately to disappear utterly and to be as though they had never been, then, although the intrinsic situational value of such achievements may not be in the least affected, a very poignant question must inevitably be raised as to the rationality of the obligation to strive for the realisation of such value, and one may question the very possibility of sustained moral effort by the man who honestly views the situation with open eyes'.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of the same article he quotes from Hans Driesch's *Man and the Universe* the following passage: 'I venture to assert that moral consciousness can have penetrative force only for those who accept immortality in some form. . . . If death is extinction, first for me as a person, and ultimately when the earth has grown cold or has been destroyed, for all mankind; then, after all, in the profoundest sense it becomes indifferent whether my actions are ethically sound or not. For in that case, life in its profoundest foundations is indifferent; it is a game of rather doubtful character. Then let me at least so order my life as to reduce its unpleasantness to a minimum. Morality is an illusion, and I reject it, for I have seen through the fraud that was employed in order to implant it in me'<sup>2</sup>—and all this is just a more elaborate way of saying what Paul says so plainly and simply: 'If the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.' Philosophers have said the same thing in their own way. It was the sense of moral obligation that led Kant to postulate immortality, for he felt that only so could he reasonably believe in

<sup>1</sup> *H.J.* April 1935, p. 427.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 428.

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its validity. And Sidgwick held that unless we are prepared to assume the reality of a transcendent future existence, 'it seems impossible to avoid a fundamental contradiction in one of the chief departments of our thought'.<sup>1</sup> It was precisely with that 'fundamental contradiction' that Paul was dealing in the saying just quoted.<sup>2</sup>

That the connection between the hope of immortality and the ethical life of man is close and intimate has often been acknowledged. 'The wider is the sweep of our contemplative vision the more clearly do we see that the rôle of man, if limited to an earthly stage, is meaningless and futile; that, however it be played, in the end it 'signifies nothing'. Will any one assert that universal history can maintain its interest undimmed if steeped in the atmosphere of a creed like this?'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Sir James Jeans, speculating on the condition of affairs on this planet a million years hence, concludes: 'Life will be more of a routine and less of an adventure than now; it will also be more purposeless when the human race knows that within a measurable space of time it must face extinction and the eternal destruction of all its hopes, endeavours and achievements'.<sup>4</sup> If man is ever completely convinced of the utter vanity and purposelessness of his life, he will have no heart for serious ethical endeavour. He will inevitably conclude that the only rational policy is to snatch what few pleasures the fates allow him before he passes into the void whence he came. Thus Paul has ample justification for his assertion that the inference to be drawn from the expectation of speedy annihilation amounts to little more than this: 'Let us eat

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Beatrice Webb: 'I cannot help having a half-conscious conviction, that, if the human race is mortal, if its existence is without aim, if that existence is to end, at however remote a period, in a complete dissolution, then life indeed is not worth living to the mass of mankind.'—*My Apprenticeship*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> *The Universe Around Us*, p. 347.

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and drink for tomorrow we die', for in such circumstances all spiritual and ethical aspiration and endeavour would be felt to be meaningless and futile.

For the Apostle, then, religion and ethics are interlocked—each implies the other, each is necessary to the other. This is a truth that needs to be proclaimed to-day from the house-tops. If men really care for moral values, they are logically bound to care for religion too; for the love of God is the creative source and spring of those moral values upon which—apart from all other considerations—the very continuance of civilisation and the well-being of man depend.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ETHICAL APPROACH TO PAULINE THOUGHT

#### (a) PAUL AS A THINKER

It is a great mistake to think of Paul as a 'theologian' in the modern sense of the term. True, he did some very hard thinking about religion, and sought to give intellectual form to the content of his religious experience, but he was from first to last a Christian preacher and teacher and missionary, absorbed in the purely practical task of trying to make clear to ordinary men what Christianity really was and what it could do for them and of winning them over to the faith. To suppose that his 'doctrines' are so difficult to understand that only a highly trained philosophical theologian can possibly fathom their meaning is clearly mistaken—for was Paul so inept as to write letters which the simple unlettered people who received them could not possibly understand? 'Paulinismus' is the creation, not of the Apostle, but of modern scholars. It is only when Paul speaks as a student of Gamaliel, and we hear echoes of the classroom, that he is obscure. At other times his meaning is often difficult for us to grasp, but the difficulty arises mainly from the fact that his first century idiom is so different from ours, and that he uses terms which then were vivid, plastic and vital, but which now are more or less fossilised, so that it is only by an effort that we can recapture their profound and intense signification both for him and for his readers. The key to the understanding of Paul is the study, not so much of philosophical theology, as of language. It is for that reason that Deissmann has made so great a contribution to a true understanding of the

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Apostle. Paul's thought always goes deep, but it is essentially simple and not beyond the power of any man, interested in life's moral and spiritual issues, to comprehend. Interpreted as 'doctrines' the terms 'Salvation', 'Justification', 'Redemption', 'Reconciliation', 'Adoption' seem very formidable and (to some people) even forbidding, but interpreted as Paul and his converts understood them, they become quite simple and raise matters of vital moment to the ordinary man. At the risk of being accused of 'over-simplification', I shall try to make this clear.

No attempt will be made within the narrow limits of this chapter completely to expound Paul's thought. Our theme is simply and solely the *ethical approach* to Pauline thought. At the centre of all his thinking is a spiritual-ethical problem. Its religious aspect can be summed up in the question: How can I enter into harmonious relations with the God of Whose existence and moral will I am aware? Its ethical aspect can be presented thus: How can I become a genuinely good man? As a Jew he could find a satisfactory answer to neither question, though it was, in the main, his conviction that Judaism alone could supply the answers he required that led him to persecute the followers of Christ. In the course of that persecution, he became aware that the victims of his fanatical zeal were actually in possession of the very things he vainly sought—peace with God and power to do the will of God. Thus he came to realise that in his endeavours to destroy the infant Church he was fighting against the truth and persecuting the innocent—'kicking against the goad'. In that way, the stage was set for his experience at Damascus. As a result of that experience, his thinking underwent a revolutionary change. He had previously supposed that he must be a good man in order to enjoy fellowship with God. Now he discovered that it was only by fellowship with God that he could ever become a good man. That fellowship was offered to him in the love of God for sinful men revealed in the life and death of Jesus, the Messiah. He accepted God's offer by

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that self-committal, self-surrender, which he called 'faith'. He became a 'new creation' in both a religious and an ethical sense. The new power at work within him he describes as 'the Spirit of God', or 'the Spirit of Christ' or 'the Holy Spirit'. He found himself endowed with a new moral capacity, renewed strength to resist evil, a new moral urge, a new ability to walk in God's ways. The 'Law' was no longer external, but within him, written upon his heart. All his ethical teaching arose directly out of this experience of moral and spiritual renewal. God's revelation in Christ was the root of his life as a Christian man and of all the demands which he made on others as a Christian apostle and teacher.

### (b) HIS VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As we have already seen the idea of the Kingdom of God was central in the thinking of Jesus, for almost all His teaching and preaching was directly or indirectly concerned with it. Even in the brief records of His ministry that have come down to us, it is referred to scores of times. His chief purpose as an ethical teacher was to make clear how men behaved when they were under the rule of God and, therefore, in the Kingdom. In striking contrast to this is the paucity of the Apostle's references to the Kingdom of God. The idea of the Kingdom *seems* to have fallen into the background. The ten authentic Pauline letters of the New Testament mention the Kingdom only a dozen times, yet these few references reveal precisely the same polarity in Paul's thought about it as we have already noted in the teaching of Jesus. As a rule, he thinks of the Kingdom in an eschatological way, as something external and to be consummated in the future. But he also thinks of it as an internal spiritual reality which can be experienced here and now. Eight of his references are definitely eschatological. Four times he declares that those who are guilty of gross fleshly sins cannot inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. vi. 9 and 10; Gal. v. 21; Eph. v. 5). In



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his exposition of the problem of the resurrection, he points out that 'flesh and blood' cannot inherit the Kingdom—the physical body has to be transformed into a spiritual body before it can share in the privileges of the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv. 50). On two occasions he exhorts his readers to become worthy of future entrance into the Kingdom, (1 Thess. ii. 12 and 2 Thess. i. 5). And the most pronouncedly eschatological reference of all is the saying: 'Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, after abolishing all rule and all authority and power', (1 Cor. xv. 24). There is one reference to the Kingdom of God which fits into either of the two categories, namely, when he speaks of his fellow-workers as engaged in the service of the Kingdom, (Col. iv. 11). The remaining three references are to the Kingdom as a present, spiritual reality, and are reminiscent of that saying of our Lord: 'The Kingdom of God is within you'. He tells the Corinthians that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of mere talking but of power—a power already at work in the Church, (1 Cor. iv. 20). He describes conversion as being rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son, (Col. i. 13). And, most remarkable of all, he declares that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality, concerned not with ritual diet, but with 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit', (Rom. xiv. 17).

In view of the rarity of Paul's references to the Kingdom of God, it is clear that his ethics, in contrast to the ethics of Jesus, are not inseparably united with the term 'Kingdom of God'. Yet the difference is not so great as might be supposed, and it is one of form rather than of substance. Both Jesus and Paul are agreed that the secret of the good life lies in fellowship with God, in living experience of the power of God at work in the heart. But while Jesus describes this experience as 'the Kingdom of God within you', Paul uses a different terminology, and speaks of the power of God, and the spirit of God, and spiritual union with the

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exalted Christ. Thus, at root, his meaning is the same as that of Jesus. Clearly a man who is living under the guidance and sway of the Spirit of God is actually under the rule of God, and, therefore, knows the Kingdom of God within him. Hence, though the term 'Kingdom of God' is so rare in Paul, the *idea* of God's rule in the heart is as central in his teaching as in that of Jesus. And as Feine says, 'If the ethical ideas of Paul were realised in the world, the Kingdom of God would have arrived.'<sup>1</sup> To find in Paul's rare use of the term 'Kingdom of God' a departure from the mind of Christ or a perversion of the original Gospel is a complete misunderstanding of the position—Paul reaches exactly the same goal as Jesus, namely, the establishment of the rule of God in the heart, though he travels by a somewhat different route.

### (c) HIS GOSPEL OF SALVATION

Paul's Gospel was obviously far more than mere ethics: yet one of the reasons why he gloried in it was that it supplied a real solution of his ethical problem—and of every man's. To him the Gospel was, in part, the good news that a new way to righteousness had been made available to men. The Code-method had proved, in his own bitter experience, a sorry failure, but now he had discovered a new method. Hence, in one of his most triumphant passages, he declares that now at length, independently of any code (*χωρὶς νόμου*), a righteousness of God has been disclosed, not merely that it may be known but that it may be communicated to men and appropriated by them, (Rom. iii. 21f.). Similarly he explains why he is not ashamed of the Gospel by pointing out that in that Gospel a righteousness of God is being revealed and is taking effect in the experience of men, for there is a divine power at the back of it—that righteousness which is a quality and an activity of God is being imparted to men. (Rom. i. 16f.). To

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 511.

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Paul, who had been hungering and thirsting for righteousness which he had hitherto been unable to achieve, it was a piece of amazingly good news that he need no longer despair or vainly struggle, for God had taken the initiative in Christ and had reached out to men, so that by the new way of self-committal to God in Christ he could gain a divine energy which would sweep him forward to the desired goal, and enable him to realise his true destiny. It is the outstanding characteristic of all genuinely Christian experience that to accept God's message in Christ and to surrender oneself to Him is to find a new power to deal with sin, a new outlook on life, a new regard for one's fellow-men, and to become aware of a new passion for the service of mankind. The *ethical* results of the real acceptance of the Gospel are always and everywhere a conspicuous feature of that event.

When Paul wishes to sum up all that the Gospel meant to him, he does so in one word—Salvation (*σωτηρία*), which, as Anderson Scott has so plainly shown, is his 'central and inclusive' idea.<sup>1</sup> The term was not a new one, for it occurs frequently in the Old Testament, where as a rule it refers to deliverance from physical ills—and especially national deliverance from mortal peril, the kind of 'Salvation' which we in this country have just experienced ourselves. In the Hellenistic world, Salvation described the deepest need of man—cleansing from sin, purity of life, the assurance of immortality. The eschatological significance which St. Paul frequently gives to the word, (e.g. 'for now is our Salvation nearer than when we came to believe', Rom. xiii. ii), is by no means its only meaning, for Christianity is not to be regarded as a religion which begins to be useful only when a man is dead. The people described in America as 'hell-dodgers' are not thinking of salvation in the true Pauline way, for Salvation is a concern not merely of the life hereafter, but of life here and now, and it is in that connection that the term is so significant for Paul's Ethics. In its

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity according to St. Paul*, p. 16.

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ethical aspects, Salvation means, on the negative side, deliverance from moral failure, moral guilt and the sense of moral impotence; while, on the positive side, it means the ability to make headway in the moral life, the sense of waxing moral power and achievement. The experience of Salvation, in its ethical reference, is, therefore, a progressive process, which finds its completion only when a man is utterly emancipated from everything evil and utterly dedicated to all that is good. It is significant that Paul never refers to the Christian as one who has been saved (*σωθείς*) but as one who is being saved, (*σωζόμενος*): 'to us who are being saved' (1 Cor. i. 18), 'the gospel by which also you are being saved' (*σώζεσθε*). The apparent exception is the passage rendered in the Revised Version 'For by hope were we saved', (*γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν*), (Rom. viii. 24), a rendering which represents Paul as affirming that hope has saved us—a most un-Pauline thought. What the apostle means here is 'only in hope have we been saved'—full salvation is not yet ours, it is still a hope for whose realisation we patiently wait. So, then, salvation on its ethical side, is growing emancipation from all that is evil and growing devotion to all that is good. The former aspect is well expressed by Augustine in the words: 'To Thy grace, Thy pity it is due, that my sins melted away like ice.'<sup>1</sup> The latter aspect is aptly described by Radhakrishnan as 'the divinising of the life of man'.<sup>2</sup>

### (d) AN ANALYSIS OF HIS IDEA OF SALVATION

While Salvation is the term which Paul uses to describe Christian experience as a whole, he employs other terms to describe various aspects of it. Just as white light is composite and by refraction can be split up into its seven component rays, so Paul's conception of Salvation is a composite thing and analysis reveals

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, Book II, Chapter vii.

<sup>2</sup> *In Idealist View of Life*, p. 123.

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the various elements which constitute it. All these elements—some, more; others, less—raise ethical issues of vital import.

### *1. Justification (δικαίωσις).*

Paul constantly refers to the man 'in Christ' as having been 'justified'. His conception of 'justification' is not so much a doctrine as a picture, and as Deissmann suggests it has 'its psychological origin in the early Jewish and early apostolic expectation of the final judgment.'<sup>1</sup> In the light of that idea, sinful man is conceived of as standing before the judgment-seat of God, but because he is 'in Christ', instead of being condemned as he deserves, he is acquitted. That is a simple vivid picture which should never be transformed into a hard and elaborate dogma. It reveals exactly and precisely what Paul has in mind. The verb he uses in this connection (δικαίωω) does not mean 'make righteous'. but 'pronounce righteous'. And in so far as the person pronounced righteous is not actually righteous, the verb acquires the forensic meaning of 'acquit'. 'There is now, therefore, no condemnation (but only acquittal) to them that are in Christ Jesus', (Rom. viii. 1). As a Jew, Paul hoped eventually *to earn* acquittal on the ground that by his complete obedience to the Law he had actually become 'perfect and upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil'. Disillusioning experience, however, had taught him that if God's favour depended on his own achievement of moral perfection, that favour was for ever forfeit. But from God's revelation in Christ he had learned that God was ready to show his favour even to the sinful, just as Hosea had shown favour to a faithless wife, and the father in the parable to a prodigal boy. (The parable of the Prodigal Son supplies a perfect example of what Paul really means by 'justification'. When the lad came repentant home, his father uttered no word of recrimination or condemnation, but treated him, bad lad that he was, as though he were a good lad,

<sup>1</sup> *Paulus*, p. 131.

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and forthwith set to work in such a way as was most likely to make a good lad of him. The lad was not condemned but acquitted, that is, in Paul's sense of the term, 'justified'. Thus 'justification' is closely akin to what we mean by 'forgiveness'—it certainly includes forgiveness, but is a more comprehensive term, as will be made clear presently). God's favour is not something that has to be earned by moral perfection but is graciously bestowed on any sinful man who wishes to be rid of his sins and to become what God would have him be. What Paul learned at the Cross of Christ was that God loves the sinful and is ready to lift them out of the miry clay, if, so to speak, they are ready to accept the help of His proffered hand. Anybody who accepts that offer is not 'condemned' because of his sinfulness, but 'acquitted' free gratis (*δωρεάν*). The essential truth of this so-called 'doctrine' of Justification can be expressed thus: 'Our task is not to make ourselves good that God may accept us; ours is to enjoy acceptance with God in Christ so as to be made good'. Any man who grasps that can get rid of the sense of guilt that follows moral failure, and of the hopelessness and feeling of frustration that inevitably go with it, and can enjoy a state of mind similar to that of one whose trial on a capital charge has ended not in condemnation but acquittal. Thus Paul's conception of 'Justification' is clear and simple and profoundly significant for the ethical life.

But this forensic idea of acquittal does not exhaust its meaning. Merely to acquit a guilty man and stop there would obviously be a farce. The man who has been 'justified' because he is 'in Christ' for the same reason begins progressively to share in the righteousness of God. He *is* potentially righteous. Just as there is the potentiality of an oak in an acorn, though an acorn is not an oak, so there is the potentiality of a good man in one who has been justified though he is not yet a good man. Again and again, Paul gives expression to this thought. 'That we may become the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)', (2 Cor. v. 21). 'But you have Him

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(God) to thank that you have entered into spiritual communion with Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness', (1 Cor. i. 30). 'For those whom he foreknew, he foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; *and whom he justified, them he will also certainly glorify*<sup>1</sup> (that is, make to share in divine moral and spiritual splendour)', (Rom. viii. 29f.). Thus there is far more than mere acquittal in the Pauline sense of Justification, the idea that the one acquitted is destined to share in the righteousness of God is necessarily involved, and that in turn means that divine resources will be placed at the disposal of the forgiven man and enable him to achieve the goodness hitherto beyond his reach. 'I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off; and my salvation will not tarry', (Is. xlii. 13). God *will* make righteous the man whom He acquits.

The profound ethical significance of all this is obvious. To the man who is oppressed by the sense of moral failure and guilt and inclined to regard all his moral aspirations and endeavours as hopeless, the Gospel of Christ brings the assurance of Divine acquittal and Divine help if only he is prepared to accept what is offered.

### (2). *Redemption* (ἀπολύτρωσις)

Redemption is commonly thought of as an impenetrable mystery, and the term is often used by people who cannot give the slightest idea of what they actually mean by it. But just as behind Paul's idea of Justification we see the picture of an accused (and guilty) man being acquitted by a judge, so behind his idea of Redemption there is the picture of a slave being set free. Many of the early Christians were slaves and so the word redemption was full of meaning for them. The manumission (that is, redemption)

<sup>1</sup> The aorist (ἐδόξασεν) is here used for the future to express the idea of unshakable certainty.

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of slaves was a daily occurrence in the world in which Paul lived. A slave and his master repaired to a temple, and the master sold the slave to the god of the temple, receiving the purchase-price out of the temple treasury, (it had actually been put there by the slave out of his earnings or by someone—a 'redeemer'—interested in his emancipation). The slave was thus sold to the god 'for freedom'; he became the property of the god, yet not his temple-slave but only his protégé. He entered the temple a slave, but left it a free man.<sup>1</sup> Thus the word 'redemption', so often a sheer enigma to the modern man, was a most vivid and profoundly meaningful term in the ancient world. Paul's central thought in this connection is that a man who is the slave of sin, 'in Christ' becomes free, that is, experiences redemption, emancipation. 'In whom (Christ) we have redemption', (Col. i. 14); 'the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus', (Gal. ii. 4). The Pauline conception of redemption is perfectly expressed in St. John's Gospel, in the words: 'Verily, verily I say unto you, everybody who commits sin is a slave. . . if, therefore, the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed', and in the saying of Jesus, 'The Son of Man is come not to be served but (as a slave) to serve, and to give his life as a ransom to set many (slaves) free', (Mk. x. 45).

Paul frequently personifies sin as an alien power at work in the hearts of men, tyrannising over them and forcing them into obedience to itself. He describes himself in his pre-Christian days as 'sold into bondage to sin', (*πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν*, Rom. vii. 14). The bitterness of that bondage he describes in words that awaken a responsive echo in every heart that has known a similar servitude: 'For what I do, I cannot understand; for I do not accomplish what I want, but the thing that I hate, that I do. . . That being the case, it is no longer I who do what I do, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, or rather, in my lower nature, no good dwells. For the wish is present with me, but the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, pp. 271 ff.



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power to do the good is not. For I cannot do the good I want to do, but the evil I wish to avoid is what I accomplish. But if I do the thing I do not wish to do, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin dwelling in me. So I find it the rule, that when I want to do good, it is evil that appears on the scene', (Rom. vii. 15-21). His *de profundis* cry: 'O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?' is a cry for redemption. His exclamation: 'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord' registers the fact that in Christ he has found the redemption he sought. Christ had bought him out of sin's bondage and had set him free. As Johannes Weiss says: 'The religion of Paul would be incompletely described if it were represented only as the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. He is conscious of having been set free not only from guilt but also from the power of sin.'<sup>1</sup>

Man is all too often the abject slave of his own lower nature, of raw instinct and passion, unable to do the good he wishes to do, seemingly helpless to resist the force of his natural impulses, just swept willy-nilly into sins which in his better moments he detests. When such a man is sick with sin and weary of his own impotence, what he yearns for is redemption, some power that will emancipate him from bondage to sin. It is the very essence of Christian experience that a man actually finds 'in Christ' a new power to deal with sin. Sin progressively, and more or less swiftly, loses its power, its fatal fascination, its charm, its attractiveness. Ideally, the Christian is dead to it—things evil have no more power to appeal to him than to a corpse. When, in Masfield's *The Everlasting Mercy*, Saul Kane cries:

*I did not think, I did not strive,  
The deep peace burnt my me alive,  
The bolted door had broken in,  
I knew that I had done with sin,*

<sup>1</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, p. 398.

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he is describing the ethical results of what Paul means by redemption. Paul would have agreed with Ritschl's view of religion as above all a practical matter. 'It is neither knowledge nor feeling, but power. It is the means through which man bound under the iron law of nature, feeling himself, both in his inner and outer life, a slave to forces from whose blind necessity he cannot escape, passions which he cannot control, mysteries which he cannot resolve, is delivered from this tyranny, and introduced into the realm of freedom where alone he can realise his true destiny.'<sup>1</sup>

Paul frequently refers to this fact of redemption. 'But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were the slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to the type of teaching to which you were introduced, and having been set free from sin, you became slaves (that is, *voluntary* slaves) to righteousness', (Rom. vi. 16). In the fully redeemed man the reign of sin is at an end—'let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body', (Rom. vi. 12)—and the reign of God has taken its place. Thus, once more, the Pauline conception of Redemption is in complete harmony with the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God as an internal spiritual reality. As Herrmann points out: 'The rule of God in us is our redemption.'<sup>2</sup> Redemption thus involves an ethical transformation—the proclivity to evil is superseded by a proclivity to good. 'That is the true Redemption which beats us down and raises us up. Man finds his higher self only in One higher to whom he utterly surrenders himself, his freedom only in the imperious 'must' of love. *Amor dei, beata necessitas boni*—that sums up all.'<sup>3</sup>

This idea of Redemption as emancipation, in living experience, from the power of evil, brings it down from the clouds of mere theological speculation and makes it one of the supreme and paramount concerns of every man.

<sup>1</sup> W. Adams Brown, *The Essence of Christianity*, pp. 235 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Dogmatik*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Harnack, *Reden u. Aufsätze*, Vol. II, p. 376.

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### 3. *Reconciliation* (καταλλαγή).

Once again, a very simple illustration makes it quite clear what Paul means by Reconciliation. If husband and wife have become estranged and mutually hostile, and through the good offices of a third party, harmonious relations are restored, a 'reconciliation' takes place. In dealing with the question of divorce in his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul lays it down that if a wife has actually separated from her husband, she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled (N.B. *καταλλάγητω*) to her husband, (1 Cor. vii. 11).

In his so-called 'doctrine' of Reconciliation Paul is dealing with a very common fact of experience. The consciousness of guilt resulting from the failure to do the will of God leads to a sense of estrangement from God and may even induce the feeling that God has become our adversary. In his pre-Christian days such seems to have been Paul's state of mind—he felt estranged from God and thought that God was hostile to him. But 'in Christ' there had been a reconciliation. The word *καταλλαγή* implies a change of attitude in both parties (God and man), though, as Weiss points out, the stress of the word lies on the restoration of a fellowship that has been disturbed.<sup>1</sup> According to Paul, the initiative is taken by God's love and man's hostility is broken down. 'But God proves his own love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', (Rom. v. 8). 'It has all come from God who has reconciled me to himself through Christ, and has given me the ministry of reconciliation, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and entrusted to me the message of reconciliation', (2 Cor. v. 18f.). Paul's view seems to have been that God and man were standing in opposition to each other, that man cherished hostility to God and God cherished anger against sinful man, but through Christ, *whom God Himself provided, and, therefore, through God's gracious initiative*, the complete reconciliation

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. p. 384.

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of God and man has been made possible, and 'in Christ' any man can enter into harmonious relations with God. 'For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, (which was a demonstration of the love of God for sinful men for the purpose of breaking down their hostility), much more after having been reconciled we shall be saved in his life; and not only so, but we also triumph in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.' The essence of Reconciliation is the sense of peace with God (Rom. v. i.) which everybody 'in Christ' actually experiences. As Deissmann says: 'The idea of Reconciliation in Paul, coincides, so far as the substance is concerned, with the undogmatic thought—Peace.'<sup>1</sup>

So far as Pauline ethics is concerned, it is important to note that moral failure is responsible for the sense of estrangement from God, and that the sense of peace with God resulting from Reconciliation carries with it conduct that is in harmony with the mind of God, for only as a man submits to the will of God by putting his will into line with the will of God can he continue to enjoy peace with God.

### *4. Sonship or Adoption (υιοθεσία).*

Here again Paul is not propounding a 'doctrine' but illustrating a spiritual truth in a way that would appeal strongly to anybody in the Graeco-Roman world of his day. As Deissmann has pointed out, the word which Paul uses here has often been found in inscriptions and in the papyri, and it is evident that 'adoption' was a frequent practice in the Hellenistic world, so that the term was immediately intelligible to the ordinary man.<sup>2</sup> What happened was this—a well-to-do but childless man frequently adopted a slave-youth, who thus, by a stroke of amazing good fortune,

<sup>1</sup> *Paulus*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Paulus*, p. 136 f., cf. *Licht vom Osten*, p. 286, and *Neue Bebelstudien*, p. 66 f.

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ceased to be a slave, was made a member of the family, and became a son and heir. It was this current practice of adoption which, more than any Old Testament references to sonship (e.g. 2 Sam. vii. 14; Is. xliii. 6; Jer. xxxi. 9), influenced Paul's teaching. A more vivid way of describing a man's new status 'in Christ' could hardly be conceived. 'Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus', (Gal. iii. 26); 'Having foreordained us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself', (Eph. i. 5); 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. . . . and if children, also heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ', (Rom. viii. 14, 17). In its religious aspects the term Adoption refers to the Christian's sense of being the object of God's love and his assurance that he will inherit eternal life—of which the gift of the Holy Spirit is a first instalment (*ἀρραβών*). Paul's view was that every human being was God's creature, but only those who were living in fellowship with God were His 'Sons'—an idea which finds perfect expression in St. John's Gospel: 'As many as received him, to them he gave the spiritual capacity (*ἐξουσίαν*) to become children of God, even to them who believe on his name, who were born not of ordinary physical generation, and not of sexual impulse, and not of human purpose, but of God', (i. 12f.). The ethical implications of Adoption are obvious. A 'son of God' must behave in a manner worthy of his august descent, and only those who so behave are truly 'sons'. Here the teaching of Paul comes very close to that of Jesus, Who saw in every human being a *potential* child of God, and Who urged men to prove themselves *actual* sons of God by their godlike behaviour. Thus, in pleading for a magnanimous temper in men, He appeals to the magnanimity of God 'who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust', and points out that only as men behave like God can they really prove themselves to be the sons of God.

5. *Sanctification* (ἁγιασμός).

Nowadays when a person is eulogistically described as a 'saint', what is meant is that he is a perfect example of piety and virtue. But the Greek word ἅγιος which is commonly rendered 'saint' is a predominantly religious word and means primarily 'sacred', 'dedicated to God', 'consecrated'. But the corresponding verb 'sanctify' (ἁγιάζω) and the corresponding nouns 'sanctification' (ἁγιασμός) and 'holiness' (ἁγιωσύνη) are predominantly and almost exclusively ethical.<sup>1</sup> That is very significant—since the Christian is one who is dedicated to God (ἅγιος), it is his ethical task to sanctify himself and to aim at utter holiness of life. The process of sanctification is called ἁγιασμός, and when that process is complete, ἁγιωσύνη, holiness of life is achieved. The former word occurs fairly frequently in Paul, the latter word only three times, and the distinction between the two is always strictly observed, for while Christians are naturally engaged in the 'sanctification' of themselves, actual 'holiness' of life is still, so far as they are concerned, a somewhat distant goal. Paul does speak of Jesus as the Son of God 'by virtue of the holiness of his Spirit', (Rom. i. 4), but he never credits Christians with such holiness, for them it is simply the target at which they are to aim, (2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 13).

What then does the Apostle mean by sanctification (ἁγιασμός)? He starts out from the idea that God is holy, and he conceives of that holiness in ethical terms, for God's holiness consists in separation from everything impure, imperfect, and sinful. This holiness, God, by the gift of His Spirit, shares with men. Christians are consecrated to God, (ἅγιοι), i.e. from the religious point of view they are already holy, and their chief concern, therefore, is to become morally what they already are religiously. Holiness of life is thus at once a gift and a task, or, as the Germans say, a 'Gabe' and an 'Aufgabe'. What the Christian has to aim at is pro-

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, *N.T.Th.* Vol. II, p. 158.

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gressive release from sin and progressive moral renewal and transformation. This process is 'sanctification', and with this task the Christian must occupy himself strenuously—he must 'work at it', in the serene confidence that God in His goodwill is sure to provide both the willingness and the power to carry it out to the end, (Phil. ii. 12f.). It is noteworthy that Paul nowhere suggests that God does everything and leaves the Christian with nothing to do for himself. Just as in the realm of agriculture, there *could* be no harvest without the forces of nature, but *would* be no harvest without the labour of man; so, in Paul's view, holiness of life *cannot* be achieved without the power of God, but *will not* be achieved without the obedient co-operation of the Christian.

He makes it perfectly clear and definite what sanctification involves. Converts, who, in their pagan days, had indulged freely in the sins of the flesh, must now renounce such sins—'for this is the will of God, namely, your sanctification, that you refrain from fornication. . . for when God's call came to us it was a call not to impurity but to sanctification', (1 Thess. iv. 3, 7; cf. 1 Cor. vi. 11). It is for the Christian to share in Christ's death to sin and by rising again with Him to live and move and have his being in a new sphere of life (Rom. vi. 4f.). He must no longer allow the members of his body to be the instruments of sin, but must dedicate them to God in the service of righteousness. His whole being (*σῶμα*) must be offered as a living sacrifice to God, (Rom. xii. 1). He must regard his body as a temple in which God's Spirit dwells, and must jealously guard it from everything profane, (1 Cor. vi. 19). As one consecrated to God, he must carefully foster and cherish compassion, kindliness, humility, considerateness of others, long-temperedness, forbearance, and willingness to forgive, (Col. iii. 12f.). He is to regard himself as one destined to bear Christ's likeness, (Rom. viii. 29), for Christ is to be formed within him, (Gal. iv. 19). 'But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into

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the same likeness, from one glory to another—this is brought about by the Lord who is Spirit', (2 Cor. iii. 18). Just as Adam was physically reproduced in his descendents, so Christ, the Pioneer of the New Humanity, is to be morally and spiritually reproduced in believers. Such, then, is Sanctification. Christians are to become in moral reality what they already are from the religious point of view as people dedicated to God, and, therefore, committed to share in the divine holiness. In effect, Paul says to his converts, in the words of Pindar: 'Become what you are'.

The Apostle was fully alive to the fact that the actual state of his Christian converts was very different from the ideal. Potentially they were dead to sin, but sin still worked in them as a latent power. Potentially the flesh had been crucified, but in reality it needed to be kept under by drastic self-discipline. The 'Gabe' and Aufgabe' aspects of Sanctification were both perfectly clear to him.

### 6. *Life (ζωή).*

Another of the ways in which Paul seeks to make clear the meaning of Christian salvation is his insistence that it has led him into life, that Christ has communicated Life to him. This conception of Life was the climax of a long development. Even in the Old Testament it was recognised that while daily bread made life possible, only God-given ideals could make life worth living, that 'Man doth not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live', (Deut. viii. 3). The prophets taught that it was only as men turned to God that they began really to live. The Psalmist cried: 'With thee is the fountain of life', (xxxvi. 9). Divine Wisdom is represented as saying: 'Whoso findeth me, findeth life', (Prov. viii. 35). The prominence of this conception of Life in the teaching of Jesus has already been noted, especially the saying: 'Narrow is the way that leadeth unto Life'. So Paul found 'in Christ' what he called 'Life'.



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He spoke of the heathen as 'alienated from the life of God', (Eph. iv. 18), and of those who were being saved as finding in the gospel message 'a fragrance from life to life', i.e. to fulness of Life. He put a moral meaning into baptism by emphasising that it involved a new way of Life (Rom. vi. 4). The Christian is described as sharing in 'the spiritual principle of Life in Jesus Christ', (Rom. viii. 2). To think in terms of the lower nature means death, but thinking in terms of the Spirit means Life, (Rom. viii. 6). By his bearing amid suffering and persecution, he claimed that he showed that the Life of Jesus was active in him, driving his poor mortal body into Christian service and overcoming all the resistance offered by its weakness and weariness. He urged the Philip-pians not to relax their grip (*ἐπέχοντες*) on the truths that were taught them in the message that brought Life to them, (ii. 16). When he tells the Colossians 'Your life is hid with Christ in God', he means that the true life is yet to be revealed, at present it is only partially manifest, being, in the main, latent; 'but when Christ Who is our Life is made manifest, then you too will be made manifest with him in glory', (iii. 3f.). A similar idea is expressed in the first Epistle of John: 'It is not yet apparent what we shall be, but we know that when He is made manifest, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is', (iii. 2).

One of the outstanding characteristics of man is that mere existence, life in the purely biological sense, cannot satisfy him. The fallacy which vitiates so much of the social thinking of our day lies precisely in the notion that when all man's economic needs are satisfied he will be in paradise, and will have attained the only salvation that he needs. The truth is that men cannot just vegetate, and if the universal material paradise of those reformers who think purely in economic terms were realised man's spiritual hunger would become more acute than ever, and the El Dorado of his social dreams, when it was once reached, would prove a bitterly disappointing place. Man needs what Paul calls Life as

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well as life. Without moral and spiritual ideals and a moral and spiritual destiny, mere existence simply is not worth what it costs. The Christian has Life. The Life of the Christian is a Life whose final issue is Christlikeness. The sign that this life is already at work in a man is the appearance in him in some measure at least of the virtues of Christ.

### 7. *A New Creation* (καινή κτίσις).

Paul makes the startling claim that the genuinely Christian man is a re-created man. God has been at work on his life and has re-fashioned it, just as an agriculturist might transform a farm or a builder re-construct a house, (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. iii. 9). 'If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has arrived', (2 Cor. v. 17). 'For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any importance, what matters is a new creation', (Gal. vi. 15). Paul is thinking primarily of his own personal experience. We have here 'the other chapter of the Pauline Genesis on whose first page that sudden gleam of the light of Damascus was written. As one who lives in Christ, Paul divides his life into two great periods, that of the old Paul and that of the new-created Paul.'<sup>1</sup> But what had happened to him he regarded as possible to any man. Further, he had seen other men undergo an even more radical change and re-creation than himself—even fornicators, idolators, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, cheats, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. Thus Paul had abundant reason to believe in the possibility of the re-creation of human nature.

The heresy that human nature never changes lies like a foul barrier across the path of human progress. Jeremiah did a great disservice to mankind when, surely in a moment of deep depression and stark despair, he wrote: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that

<sup>1</sup> Deissmann, *Paulus*, p. 139.

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are accustomed to do evil', (xiii. 23), for this word has been a choice morsel in the mouths of cynics ever since. Dabblers in science and psycho-analysis talk glibly about heredity and environment and the complexes and inhibitions which lie in our unconscious, and suggest that all men are what they are by necessity and that from the remorseless grip of fate no man can ever be snatched. The results of this mode of thought are disastrous. Some people despair of themselves and suppose that any moral fault or weakness will inevitably sully their lives and remain with them to the end of the chapter, till life's silver chord be loosed and life's golden bowl be broken. For centuries this heresy darkened counsel in dealing with the criminal classes who were regarded as hopeless bogey-men;

*Forgers and murderers are misbegotten,  
Let them be hanged, and let them be forgotten.  
A rotten fool should have a rotten end.  
'Mend them', you say? The rotten never mend.<sup>1</sup>*

All proposals for a fairer, kinder, social life are usually blocked by people who declare that before such a social order can come into being, human nature will have to change, and they assume that it never can be changed. The idea of eliminating the scourge of war is scoffed at by people who assert that man is by nature a fighting animal, so that men are doomed to the very end of time periodically to fly at one another's throats. The mere scientific facts that all the beautiful roses of the world have arisen by careful culture of the wild dog-rose of the hedge-row, and all the various types of pigeon from the slaty blue pigeon of the woods, and all sweet apples from the sour crab, should give pause to those who are so certain that human nature cannot be changed. Can the possibility of transformation which cannot be denied to a wild rose or a wild pigeon or a crab apple be denied to human nature? The truth is

<sup>1</sup> J. Masfield, *The Widow in Bye Street*.

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that human nature is not fixed. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. Human nature has been declared to be the most plastic part of the living world: the most adaptable, the most educable. 'That the individual is modifiable for better or for worse is an experimental certainty.'<sup>1</sup>

The witness of Christian experience is perfectly clear. There is no part of the world to which the Christian Gospel has been taken which has not witnessed the complete transformation of human beings—not even excepting the Fiji islands where a hundred years ago there were cannibals of the most loathsome type, a profligacy so disgusting that Darwin declared it unparalleled in any part of the world. The Christian message may appear to many to-day—as it appeared to many in Paul's day—to be mere 'foolishness', but, as the Apostle says, it is able to save them that believe, for if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation. The transformation is both religious and ethical. Not only is a man thereby spiritually quickened, but he gains a new moral interest and outlook, new ideas about right and wrong, and above all a new capacity to eschew evil and achieve good. His conscience becomes tender and unconsenting where moral evil is concerned, exacting in its high moral standards. His native gifts are purified and enhanced. The fight against sin is re-invigorated—he is endowed with a new power to do the will of God. He is 'born again from above', 'a new creation'.

Such then is the meaning of Salvation for Paul—release from moral guilt and impotence, emancipation from the thralldom of sin, harmonious relations with God and a good conscience, the sense of 'noblesse oblige' that springs from adoption into God's family, the sanctification of conduct, the sense of Life as a high and noble calling, and a nature re-made according to God's mind and will.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Thomson, *Biology*, p. 151.

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### (e) THE 'FLESH' (σάρξ) AND THE 'SPIRIT' (πνεῦμα) IN HIS TEACHING

'The Pauline ethic as a whole is dominated by the metaphysical contrast between flesh and spirit.'<sup>1</sup> Here Paul's thought was nearer to the Greek view than to the Rabbinical. The Rabbinical view was that the evil impulse (עוֹרֵר הָרָע) which was responsible for all the sin of human beings arose not out of the flesh but out of the heart of man. The root cause of sin was conceived to lie not in man's physical constitution but in his ethical perversity, in his misuse of his free-will. The Rabbis did not attribute the bad impulse to the body and the good impulse to the soul, but regarded both as part and parcel of human nature. Thus 'when Paul regards spirit and flesh as two forces which absolutely rule the human will and seeks the root of the flesh in man's physical constitution, he departs from Rabbinical theology and introduces an austere Hellenistic point of view into Christianity.'<sup>2</sup> Greek thought, (from Plato onwards), stressed the dualism in human life. The soul was divine by nature and belonged to the higher world, but was unfortunately imprisoned in the body and thus made subject to earthly conditions. According to Hellenistic thought, all our ignorance and moral weakness and sin are due to the material existence into which we were born. Hence the central problem for mankind is, in a word, simply this: How can the soul be set free from bondage to the body?

In his thinking about this matter, (as about the Future Life), Paul's view lies somewhere between the Greek and the Rabbinical, but nearer to the former than to the latter. He certainly did not take the Greek view of the body, for he looked for the redemption of the body (Rom. viii. 23), he thought of the body as capable of being made a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells, (1 Cor. vi. 19), he called on Christians to present the members of their bodies as the instruments of righteousness to God, (Rom.

<sup>1</sup> Holtzmann, *op. cit.* II, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Bousset, *op. cit.* p. 405.

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vi. 13), he urged them to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God, (Rom. xii. 1), and he thought of the physical body as destined to be transformed into a spiritual body and made the vehicle of personality beyond the grave, and no Greek would ever have spoken of the body in such ways as these. It is, therefore, clear that when Paul speaks of the 'flesh' (σάρξ) he does not completely identify it with the 'body', (σῶμα).

By 'flesh', Paul does not mean the material of which the body is composed, but the whole lower nature of man. He does not regard the flesh as the cause of sin, otherwise he would have approved of that ascetic bodily discipline, (ἀφειδία σώματος), (Col. ii. 23), which he clearly condemns as useless. But he does regard the 'flesh' as the seat of sin ('the sin that dwelleth in me'), and personifies sin as a sinister power that takes up its residence in the 'flesh', and thus makes the 'flesh' the occasion of sin. As Dean Inge remarks, σάρξ is, for Paul, 'a moral category; it means the lower instincts erected into a principle of life and action.'<sup>1</sup> By σάρξ, Paul means what we mean to-day when we speak of the natural impulses and instincts which, while they are not sinful in themselves, master us and become occasions of sin unless we master them. These natural impulses are apt to prove overpoweringly strong, so that they control a man instead of being controlled by him. Paul's choice of the name σάρξ for this lower nature of man was due doubtless to his conviction that these natural impulses have their seat in our physical constitution and there he erred, for they are not in our bodies, our flesh, but in our Selves. All the sin of man is due ultimately to his failure to control and direct his instinctive drives, which often prove so completely the masters of the situation that he feels driven into courses of action which his own reason and better judgment condemn; 'the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you wish,' (Gal. v. 17).

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. p. 79.

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Where, then, is there hope for man? Paul's view is that the natural impulses become the occasions of sin only when the spirit of man is cut off from the power of God. Hence his appeal to the Spirit of God, God in action in man's inner life, as a power that enables him to control his lower impulses and re-direct them to high ends. The life of man is thus linked with the life of God—as it were, man's trolley-pole is put into contact with God's live wire. The gift of the Holy Spirit has profound ethical as well as religious results. By the Spirit of God, the Christian man is put into the moral sphere of God, and begins spontaneously and inevitably to eschew everything that is contrary to the Divine nature. It is significant that all the fruits of the Spirit to which the Apostle refers are ethical qualities—love, joy, peace, good temper, good feeling, goodwill, integrity, considerateness for others, self-mastery, and the ethical results of spiritual experience could scarcely receive greater emphasis than in this catalogue.

Paul was no believer in the total depravity of man, for he recognised that there were elements in human nature that were akin to God, and, as a devout Jew, he naturally believed the message of Genesis that man was made in God's image. The mere fact that he described the soul of man as an arena where the forces of good and evil are striving for the mastery, and declared that man's native desire to do the right was over-powered by the 'flesh' makes it quite clear that he recognised that however depraved man was the depravity was not total. Paul was quite aware that there were higher as well as lower elements in human nature, but he was alive also to the fact that these higher elements were hindered by the 'flesh' from finding expression in life. The result of the action of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man, however, was the mobilisation of these higher powers. According to Paul, what man needs is inspiration, and that comes to him through the Spirit of God, by Whose action what was hitherto impossible is rendered possible.

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According to Jewish thought, the Spirit of God comes and goes and exercises His miraculous power only sporadically and in connection with single incidents or for special purposes, but Paul regards the Spirit as a motive power dwelling permanently in the Christian, the unceasing, creative source and spring of constantly progressive moral and spiritual renewal. When the Spirit of God is active in a man, the effects are seen in moral renewal—the lower nature is controlled, mastered, directed to ends which are in harmony with the mind and will of God. The Christian is led by the Spirit continuously. He serves God from day to day and hour to hour in the new way of the Spirit, (Rom. vii. 6). He lives by the Spirit, and all his conduct is regulated by the Spirit. His very body becomes a temple in which the Spirit takes up His permanent abode.

Thus the secret of the good life lies in the mastering of the lower elements of our nature through the quickening of the higher elements by the Spirit of God.

### (f) HIS VIEW OF FAITH

It is impossible even to begin to understand Paul unless one has grasped his conception of faith. There is probably no word in the vocabulary of religion which is so often hopelessly misunderstood. Almost all the popular ideas about faith are a sheer travesty of it, from the boy's definition of it as 'believing what you know ain't true' to the very common notion that faith is something which obligingly comes to the rescue when evidence fails. 'Faith' is often regarded as the opposite of 'reason', but the antithesis of faith is sight, not reason. When reason bars the way we can go no further, and if faith were unreasonable it would thereby be rendered an impossible attitude for any honest man. Faith is as truly based on reasoning from evidence as science itself, the only difference being—admittedly a big difference—the nature of the evidence; for



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while the only evidence that science recognises is evidence of which the physical senses can take cognizance, the evidence upon which faith rests is supplied by intuition. And has not insight as rightful and necessary a place in human experience as sight itself? Faith is inseparable from veracity of insight, and the cause of much modern unbelief is to be found in the tendency to rely exclusively on the witness of the senses and to ignore the witness of insight. Further, it is hardly too much to say that it is one of the tragedies of Christian history that, in ecclesiastical circles, faith has all too often been identified with mere intellectual belief. Hence the idea has frequently emerged that so long as a man believes certain dogmas he can be counted a Christian. But merely to believe that there is a God is not really faith in God, for such a belief may exercise no more influence on a man's life than his belief that there are rings round Saturn. As James points out (ii. 19) the very demons believe in one God and shudder. It has sometimes even been supposed that, so long as a man professes intellectual allegiance to a certain creed, he has fulfilled the essential condition laid down by Christianity, and his manner of life is a matter of comparative indifference. Such an antinomian view of faith was anathema to Paul, for, to the Jewish objection that by scrapping the Ten Commandments he had undermined morality and put mere 'faith' in its place, he replied that what he meant by faith was the root of a morality higher, nobler, and more secure, than any morality based on a code.

In all genuine faith there are three elements and in each of these elements there is an ethical motif. The three elements are—*belief, trust, loyalty*. If any one of these elements is withdrawn, what remains is no longer faith, any more than gunpowder remains gunpowder if the carbon or the saltpetre or the sulphur is extracted from it. The different conceptions of faith in the New Testament are due to the fact that the *stress* is laid now on one and now on another of these three elements; but without any neglect of the

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other two. In the teaching of Jesus about faith the stress is laid on the element of trust, as we feel instantly when we read the exhortation: 'Have faith in God', (Mk. xi. 22) or the declaration that to have faith as a grain of mustard-seed is to be able to move mountains, (Mt. xvii. 20). Jesus thinks of faith primarily as reliance on God as a sure Helper and consequently as a source of power that sets men free from over-anxiety, impotence and despair. But clearly we are bound to believe in God if we are to trust Him, and Jesus would certainly not have regarded any faith in God as genuine which did not include the desire to do the will of God. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews stresses the element of belief—he defines faith as 'confidence in things hoped for, conviction of things not seen', (xi. 1). For him, faith is primarily belief in the reality of an unseen spiritual world, but he seeks to rouse his readers out of their depression and torpor by persuading them confidently to put their trust in that spiritual order, and to display in their lives the dynamic heroic idealism which such belief and trust necessarily involve. Paul, on the other hand, as we shall see presently, gives their due to the belief and trust elements in faith, but stresses the element of loyalty. A man really believes in God only when he is aware of a spiritual Power whose right to rule over him he recognises.<sup>1</sup> A man really trusts God only when he concedes the validity of the moral claims God makes upon him and looks to God for power to fulfil them. A man is genuinely loyal to God only as he surrenders his will to the will of God. 'Absolute trust in Him implies absolute willingness to perform His will. If I have reserves and limitations on this point, my faith in Him is necessarily limited as well; I shall be unwilling to trust myself to Him, in respect of those matters in which I wish to follow my way, not His.'<sup>2</sup> Faith is thus man's response to God's approach, and such a response is a condition of

<sup>1</sup> See Herrmann, *Dogmatik*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Pym, *Psychology and the Christian Life*, p. 73.

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God's further activity in the soul. Similarly before any man can have faith in God's revelation in Christ, he must feel drawn to Christ, yield to the attraction of Christ, and resolve to follow Christ.

All these three elements are present in Paul's conception of faith. To him, faith was believing, trustful, self-surrender to the grace of God in Christ. The whole personality—mind, feeling, will—was involved. By such faith man's life was linked with the life of God, so that divine power entered into it. Thus morality is safe in spite of the abolition of the Law, for if a man has faith he is both committed to obedience to the will of God and empowered to obey. H. G. Wells has somewhere said that the first article of the modern creed is not 'I believe' but 'I commit myself'. But that is not a modern idea at all, for it expresses exactly Paul's view of faith as complete self-surrender, committing oneself with one's whole being to the God Who has revealed Himself in Christ. It is, therefore, clear that in man's act of faith-response there is a powerful ethical factor, and Paul would not have recognised as faith any so-called faith in which that ethical factor played no part.

But not only does the ethical factor play its part in the act of faith-response, faith exercises an extraordinary influence on ethical life and practice as a whole. Paul lays special emphasis on the close connection between faith and the ethical life in two passages which deserve careful consideration.

In the Church at Rome there were some Christians who felt it to be their Christian duty to abstain from meat and wine, while there were others who were convinced that as Christians they could indulge in both, with a clear conscience. The latter are designated 'strong', that is, without unnecessary scruples; and the former 'weak', that is, over scrupulous. In the course of his discussion of this issue Paul says: 'If anybody has doubts about eating and then eats, he stands condemned, for it was not faith that induced him to eat, and any action that is not based on faith is sin',

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(Rom. xiv. 23). The last sentence, usually rendered 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin' has caused not a little difficulty both to the exegete and the general reader. What Paul means is that conduct that is out of harmony with the Christian's faith-relationship to Jesus Christ is sin, and any action performed with an uneasy conscience belongs to conduct of that type. As Jülicher says: 'Only he can speak in that way to whom faith is *an activity of conscience*; in fact, faith is for Paul merely an abbreviation for: to be united with Christ, to have become a new man, to have overcome the desires of the flesh through the possession of the Spirit; believers and saints are for him convertible terms.'<sup>1</sup> The idea that faith involves loyalty could hardly be more clearly stressed.

The other passage is the saying: 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but *faith working by love*', (*πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*), (Gal. v. 6). This last phrase has been excellently rendered by Anderson Scott: 'faith expressing itself through love'. This is the only passage in Paul's letters—with the possible exception of Ephes. iii. 17—in which faith and love are linked together as cause and effect. But that does not imply that it is a mere *obiter dictum*, for the idea appears to have been fundamental to Paul's thinking. He is not rightly thought of as the mere Apostle of Faith, for he was even more the Apostle of Love. According to Paul when a man has faith, he commits himself to the love of God in Christ, and the love which he has thus experienced flows out through him towards his fellow-men. Loved himself, without desert on his part, he loves others even when they do not deserve it—as Paul himself showed in his treatment of the slave, Onesimus. 'Render to no man evil for evil. . . If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for by so doing thou wilt kindle in him a burning sense of shame. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good', (Rom. xii. 14, 20f.). Paul would have regarded the Chris-

<sup>1</sup> *Paulus und Jesus*, p. 21. (Italics mine.)

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tian who failed in love towards a fellow-creature as one guilty of behaviour as monstrous as that of the servant in our Lord's parable, who, after having been forgiven an immense debt refused to forgive a fellow-servant a debt amounting to a mere pittance in comparison.

Paul regards love as the supreme virtue of that Christian life which is born of faith. 'And more than all, have love, which gives cohesion to the perfect life', (Col. iii. 18). Of all spiritual gifts, love occupies the supreme place—higher than the preaching-gift or power to heal the sick or ecstatic utterance or genius for organisation, (1 Cor. xii-xiii.). Love will abide when all other spiritual gifts are no more, when faith is lost in vision and hope has become realisation. Love is the first of all the fruits of the Spirit. It is the gift of God. 'Concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves have been taught of God to love one another', (1 Thess. iv. 9). The quality that Christian people should display most and first of all is love, 'and this I pray, that your love may superabound ever more and more', (Phil. i. 9). Wherever there is genuine faith, there is love; and wherever there is no love, there is no faith. Faith is the great generator of love.

The issue here raised is one of supreme importance for mankind. The witness of history is definitely on the side of the Apostle. The greatest heroes of faith have all through the centuries been also great lovers of men. True, in our own day, it is often said that the Christian Church is socially ineffective, and for that reason, we are assured, millions have turned their backs on it and pinned their faith to socialism or communism or totalitarianism. Christianity, they say, fails to inflame men with a passionate concern for the welfare of their fellows or to inspire them to sacrificial service of the community, and all too often fizzles out in mere public worship and private devotion and the moral and spiritual culture of the individual. If these strictures of Christian people are justified,

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the only inference to be drawn is that faith, in the Pauline sense at least, is dead.

The witness of the past is certainly very different. What Paul meant by faith has always been active in the great representatives of the Christian Church and it has consequently always expressed itself in love. The Church has been the mother of every great enterprise for human betterment during the last two thousand years. Hospitals, schools, colleges, orphanages, institutions for the care of the leper, the blind, the waif, the stray, were born of the Church, and maintained under the Church's guardianship and at the Church's expense until they were strong enough to stand alone, and the public conscience had been so quickened and trained and educated that it could be trusted to maintain them. Modern missionary enterprise, apart from its specifically religious work, has to its credit a record of noble humanitarian activity without the feeblest parallel in the annals of mankind. John Howard was a man of faith that expressed itself in love. In the course of his extensive travels, no conditions however repulsive—and they were often too repulsive to describe—no risk of fever or plague, could turn him aside from the personal investigation of the terrible state of affairs in the prisons of Europe. How fitting that his tomb at Cherson in Russian Tartary, should bear the inscription: 'John Howard. Whosoever thou art, thou standest at the tomb of thy friend.'<sup>1</sup> The same faith in Wilberforce expressed itself in love. Of his campaign against the slave-trade, Lecky says: 'The un-weary, unostentatious and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages comprised in the history of nations.'<sup>2</sup> These are but a few illustrations of the fact that Paul stated a profound world-shaking truth when he declared that faith expresses itself in love. Secularism can show nothing comparable to the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Life of Howard*, by E. C. S. Gibson, Methuen.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 153.

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achievements of faith in the field of the amelioration of human conditions.

The ethical significance of this Pauline principle can hardly be over-estimated. The Utilitarian recognises that a man ought to seek the greatest happiness of humanity and of all sentient creatures, but no man is really equal to that task unless he has a great love for his fellow-men—the idea that one can best promote one's own interests by promoting the interests of others will carry nobody very far, for such pseudo-altruism has the canker of selfishness at its very heart, while at the heart of all genuine altruism there is that love which, as Paul says 'seeks not her own'. Similarly the Kantian sense of duty, as a matter of cold principle without any of the warmth of love, is not sufficient to sustain a man in the arduous, often disappointing, and sometimes thankless task of serving humanity. Only a great love can carry such a burden without deep discouragement; a love that so far from being idle sentimentality, spends and is spent in sacrificial service. Such a love is one of the mightiest ethical forces in the life of the world and one of the noblest qualities that can adorn a human being. Nothing but what Paul called faith can bring it into being—faith expressing itself in love. 'Do we then make the Law of no effect through faith? God forbid! Nay, we establish the Law'. (Rom. iii. 31).

## CHAPTER IX

### PAUL'S ETHICAL TERMINOLOGY

**W**e can best appreciate the nature of Paul's directly ethical teaching by considering the things he condemned, the things he commended, and the kind of ethical appeals he made.

#### (a) HIS VIEW OF EVIL

His catalogue of evils is so much more extensive than that of our Lord that some classification is necessary.

##### 1. *Sexual Sins.*

As has already been pointed out, Paul has much more to say than Jesus about sexual sins because he is dealing in the main with Gentiles amongst whom the standard in sexual matters was notoriously low, while Jesus was dealing with Jews amongst whom it was comparatively high, higher far than that of modern Europe. We know from Suetonius' *Lives of the Emperors* that sexual vices of every kind, including sodomy and its counterpart catamitism, were rampant in the Imperial Court. Of Julius Caesar, Suetonius reports a saying to the effect that he was so given up to shameless vice as to be 'every woman's man and every man's woman.'<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely possible to read the *Life of Tiberius* without coming to the conclusion that a man more hopelessly corrupt never lived. Of Nero, Suetonius writes: 'Beside abusing free-born boys and seducing married women, he debauched the vestal virgin, Rubria. The freedwoman, Acte, he all but made his lawful

<sup>1</sup> *Julius Caesar*, Ch. lii.



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wife, after bribing some ex-consuls to perjure themselves by swearing that she was of royal birth. He castrated the boy Sporus, and actually tried to make a woman of him; and he married him with all the usual ceremonies including a dowry and a bridal veil, took him to his house attended by a great throng and treated him as his wife. And the witty jest that someone made is still current, that it would have been well for the world if Nero's father, Domitius, had had that kind of wife. This Sporus, decked out with the finery of the Empresses, and riding in a litter, he took with him to the assizes and marts of Greece, and later at Rome through the Street of the Images, fondly kissing him from time to time. That he even desired illicit relations with his own mother, and was kept from it by her enemies, who feared that such a relationship might give the reckless and insolent woman too great influence, was notorious, especially after he added to his concubines a courtesan who was said to look very like Agrippina.<sup>1</sup> If the state of affairs in Imperial circles was to any extent representative of contemporary life, there is abundant justification for the terrific indictment of the Gentile world found in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans.

It is understandable therefore, that in his dealings with Gentile Churches, Paul should return again and again to the question of sexual perversity. This is no proof that a swift moral decline had set in amongst Gentile Christians, but an indication that many Gentile converts were slow to shed those views of sexual vice which were current in the world around them, and which they had fully shared in their pre-Christian days. We have definite proof (1 Cor. vi. 13), that some Gentile Christians were inclined to argue that illicit sexual relations were simply a response—and an inevitable response—to a call of nature; that just as food was meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, so the sexual organs were intended to be exercised in any way that the sexual

<sup>1</sup> *Nero*, XXVIII.

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appetite suggested. Their view apparently was the same as that of some of our 'enlightened' moderns that the pleasures of sex are quite harmless. Hence Paul urged that it was a monstrous thing to take the body, which, in the case of the Christian, belongs to Christ and is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and devote it to a harlot.

It cannot be too strongly insisted that Paul's demand on Gentile Christians for utter purity of life constituted for them a moral revolution. It was to many of them an entirely new ethical idea, for they had been inclined hitherto to regard illicit sexual relations as matters of complete moral indifference. Paul's plea against vice was, of course, a religious one. Just as Jesus declared that the sins of the flesh separate men from God, so Paul warned his converts that those who were guilty of such sins could never inherit the Kingdom of God. He stood for the principle, so finely stated in the Epistle to Diognetus, that though the Christian lives in the flesh, he does not live according to the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Paul is absolutely uncompromising in his condemnation of fornication and adultery. He insists on continence before marriage and fidelity in marriage as the obvious duty of Christian people. His viewpoint on the matter is exactly the same as that of his Master. Needless to say he is just as severe on sodomites (*ἀρσενικοῖται*) and their associates, catamites (*μαλακοί*). Two other sins of this class he mentions. One is 'uncleanness' (*ἀκαθαρσία*) which is the opposite of holiness of life (*ἀγιωσύνη*), and by which he means moral impurity of any kind. The other is 'lasciviousness' (*ἀσέλγεια*—a word of unknown etymology, which probably means 'wantonness'). According to Lightfoot, 'A man may be *ἀκάθαρτος* (unclean) and hide his sin; he does not become *ἀσελγής* (wanton) until he shocks public decency.'<sup>2</sup> This distinction is doubtful, and probably the idea of the word is simply complete

<sup>1</sup> Ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> On Gal. v. 19.

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lack of restraint in sensuality, utter wantonness, unbridled licentiousness.

There are many to-day who are inclined to reject the New Testament teaching on sexual matters, simply because they do not regard the question from the religious point of view. Granted the religious premises of the New Testament, the ethical inference it draws is absolutely unassailable. To establish the ethical soundness of the New Testament view of sexual relations on other grounds is not easy. So far as I am aware, nobody to-day seeks to justify sodomy, which is clearly an unnatural vice, and can be condemned on general grounds. There are not a few, however, who see nothing wrong in adultery, and who maintain that a wife should raise no objection if her husband associates with other women, and similarly that a husband should not object if his wife associates with other men. As they brush aside the religious argument against adultery, it is useless, in their case, to appeal to that. In this matter, therefore, experience will have to be their teacher, and experience will prove that adultery is fatal to the stability of the home and the family and, therefore, has the gravest social consequences. They will then, perhaps, come to realise that there is the wisdom of the ages—apart from all religious considerations—behind the command: 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'. As for promiscuous sexual relations before marriage, those who rule out the religious argument against them would be well advised carefully to weigh the consequences of such relations to body, mind, character, self-respect, any future marriage, eventual offspring and social life. The Russian reaction against promiscuity has already been noted, a reaction due, of course, not to any religious considerations, but to the fact that it did not work well in actual practice—which is at least evidence that the Christian view of sexual relations is not just 'the hobgoblin of the nursery'. It would be interesting to know the results of what is alleged to have been the Nazi practice of encouraging German girls,

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whether they were married or not, to bear children and so raise up soldiers for the Reich. On purely aesthetic grounds, and without regard to any moral or religious presuppositions, one feels that there is something revolting in the treatment of girls as though they were just mares on a stud-farm. The sufferings of countless girls of various nationalities who, during the war, were forced into soldiers' brothels, beggar description, and such a practice was as disgusting as it was brutal. But when a high standard in sexual matters is once abandoned, people are apt to find themselves on a slippery slope down which they slither into every kind of unseemliness and abomination. Those intellectuals of our day who so glibly and airily describe the pleasures of sex as 'harmless' are encouraging moral laxity without adequately estimating the possible dire results. Actual contact with the grave domestic tragedies, (including much child-suffering), which have resulted from the infidelity of many soldiers to their wives and many soldiers' wives to their husbands, would probably serve as a useful check to those who make so frivolous an assertion, and would probably suggest even to such champions of modernity that there is at least something to be said for the old-fashioned New Testament view of the matter. The lurid posters freely distributed over our cities and towns with their warnings about venereal disease are hardly a good advertisement for promiscuous sexual relations. Incidentally, they sometimes put in a plea for that 'clean living' which is so highly commended in the New Testament. I once lectured in a northern prison to all the convict women of England and observed that the vast majority of them were young. The chaplain informed me that most of the young women were there because, after having been seduced and abandoned by 'gallant knights' out for 'harmless' pleasure, they had killed the babies born to them. I left the gaol with the conviction that there was far more to be said, on purely practical and prudential grounds, in favour of the Christian sexual ethic than

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irreligious people admit. The experience of mankind taken as a whole testifies to the soundness of Christian teaching on sex.

### *2. Debauchery.*

Paul declares that those who indulge in drunken bouts (*μέθαι*) and carousings (*κῶμοι*) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and thus brands these things as morally evil, (1 Cor. vi. 10; Rom. xiii. 13). He urges the Ephesians to seek the stimulus and inspiration they need by being filled with the Holy Spirit and not being soaked in wine, (Eph. v. 18). To-day, happily, there are few who do not admit that drunkenness is an evil thing. That was not always the case. In the eighteenth century drunkenness was commonly regarded in England as a harmless eccentricity, and was not even deemed to be ungentlemanly, let alone immoral. It was almost a distinction to be 'as drunk as a lord'. Writing of this period, Lecky says: 'There were hackney coachmen who derived their chief gains from cruising at late hours through certain quarters of the town for the purpose of picking up drunken gentlemen. They conveyed them to their homes if they were capable of giving their address; and, if not, to certain taverns where it was the custom to secure their property and put them to bed. In the morning the coachman returned to take them home, and was in general handsomely rewarded.'<sup>1</sup> This lenient view of drunkenness is now seldom held, and most people agree with Paul that it is a vice. The New Testament does not insist on total abstinence, but it sternly condemns all excess. This attitude is endorsed by most people to-day as eminently reasonable and ethically sound.

### *3. Sins of Speech.*

Paul makes so many references to the wanton and irresponsible use of the tongue that he would probably have agreed with all

<sup>1</sup> *History of 18th Century*, Vol. III, p. 197.

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that James has to say about this errant little member of the body. 'So also the tongue is a small organ, yet it has a great sense of its own importance. How small is the spark that can set a whole forest ablaze! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue presents itself as a veritable world of iniquity amongst our members for it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the whole round of human society with a flame fed by hell. . . The tongue no man can tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. From the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be', (iii. 5ff.).

Paul deals with the various base uses to which the tongue is put. He issues warnings against what is nowadays commonly called 'dirty talk'. For this sin of the tongue he has three names, 'corrupt speech' (σαπρὸς λόγος), 'foul language' (αἰσχρολογία), and 'scurrilous jesting' (εὐτραπεία). The last word (from εὖ and τρέπω) was used in a good sense by Aristotle and referred to jocularly (in excellent taste), pleasantry, wit;<sup>1</sup> but in Paul it refers to facetiousness carried to excess and unseemliness. He condemns 'inane chatter', (μωρολογία—a word which Plato uses of the conversation of a man who has drunk too much wine<sup>2</sup>), and the empty braggart (ἀλαζών, lit. vagabond).

Specially noteworthy are his references to the kind of conversation that does harm to the reputation of other people behind their backs. He condemns those who *secretly* attack the characters of others, gossips and scandalmongers, 'whisperers' (ψιθυρισταί) as he significantly calls them, and also those who are open and loud-mouthed when they make disparaging remarks about others, 'defamers', (κατάλαλοι). The distinction thus drawn reminds one of the 'Peter Hush' and 'Lady Blast' who form the subject of one of Addison's essays. 'Peter Hush has a whispering hole in

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Eth. IV*, viii. 3; *X*, vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See *M.M.* s.v.

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most of the great coffee-houses about town. If you are alone in a wide room, he carries you up into a corner of it, and speaks in your ear. . . The Lady Blast. . . has such a particular malignity in her whisper that it blights like an easterly wind, and withers every reputation that it breathes upon. . . Her whisper can blast the character of an innocent young woman, or fill a healthy young fellow with a variety of distempers'. The Apostle is here tackling one of the greatest social evils of every age, the tendency of men and women to find a malicious delight in defaming the character of people by retailing, surreptitiously or openly, as secret whisperers or open defamers, without regard to their truth or falsity, evil reports about others, as did the wily Vivien, who thus sowed discord even among the Knights of King Arthur:

*She let her tongue  
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,  
Polluting and imputing her whole self,  
Defaming and defacing, till she left  
Not even Lancelot brave, or Galahad clean.*

Paul is no less severe on those who address insulting and abusive remarks to others. Hence his condemnation of 'hurtful language' which seems to be the meaning of *βλασφημία* in its ethical reference. This word has been rendered 'blasphemy' in the A. V. (Col. iii. 8), but that is clearly wrong, for Paul is dealing not with irreverent speech about God but with abusive speech addressed to man. (The most probable derivation of the word is *βλάβος* cf. *βλάπτω*, and *φημί*<sup>1</sup>, and thus the meaning is 'injurious speaking') An extreme form of the same thing is 'abuse' (*λοιδορία*). According to Calvin '*λοιδορία* is a harsher railing, which not only rebukes a man, but sharply bites him, and stamps him with open contumely. Hence *λοιδορεῖν* is to wound a man as with an

<sup>1</sup> *M.M.* s.v.

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accursed sting'<sup>1</sup>, (cf. John ix. 28: 'And they reviled—ἐλοιδόρησαν—him and said, Thou art a disciple of this fellow').

All these sins of the tongue result in harm to other people and are, therefore, grave offences against the law of Christian love. It may seem strange, at first sight, that Paul found it necessary to warn the members of his Churches against such moral *lapsus linguae*, but they occur, alas, in all communities and in all circles of society.

### 4. *Crass Selfishness.*

Paul frequently turns to the question of selfishness—the misuse of the instincts of acquisitiveness and self-assertion. The reference: 'Let the thief steal no more', (Eph. iv. 28) is *possibly* to parasitism, and hence the injunction that follows, calling on every man, instead of living at other people's expense, to earn an honest wage so as to be in a position not merely to support himself but also to assist the needy. He denounces the rapacity (ἀρπαγή) which makes a man a swindler (ἄρπαξ), and the violent, insolent, outrageous contempt for the rights and interests of others (ὕβρις) which makes a man an intolerably overbearing individual (ὕβριστής). He warns men against being inflated with a sense of their own importance (φυσίωσις). Another aspect of selfishness with which he deals several times is 'self-seeking' (ἐριθία)—always rendered 'faction' in the E. T. The word is derived from ἐριθεύομαι, 'work for hire', and a wool-weaver was called ἔριθος ἐρίων. According to Aristotle, the ἐριθευόμενοι were those who sought to win elections by illegal means, so that 'self-seeking' seems to be the essential meaning of the word, which denotes the attitude of those who are all-out for their own gain. Thus, as Büchsel points out,<sup>2</sup> the honourable wage earner (ἐριθος) has been forced to give his name to designate something contemptible, just as the word 'proletariate', another term of contempt, has been derived

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *T.W.N.T.* Vol. II, p. 658.



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from *proletarius*, a later born son, left without inheritance, and, therefore, forced to work for his daily bread. In the meaning of the noun we see the aristocratic contempt of the man of education and ample means for the poor wage-earner, who was regarded as one who sought only his own gain, and did whatever he did for the sake of profit. Thus the word came to mean contemptible self-seeking, the style of the man who cannot raise his thought and endeavour to a higher level than selfish interest and gain.

It is often alleged that Paul thought of the word as connected with *ἔρις*, 'strife', and both Jerome and Chrysostom explain *ἐριθία* as 'quarrelsomeness', a meaning which Lietzmann is inclined to accept.<sup>1</sup> But a careful consideration of the passages in which the word occurs points rather to the conclusion that Paul may have used the word in its undoubtedly original sense. e.g. 'Some preach Christ out of love for me, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel; others out of self-seeking (*ἐξ ἐριθίας*), not with pure motives', (Phil. i. 17). 'Let nothing be done in self-seeking (*κατὰ ἐριθείαν*) or in vainglory', (Phil. ii. 3).

The selfish ambition which Paul has in mind can be a terrible snare, in that it leads a man into having an eye merely for his own interest and advantage. His ambition is for prominence, for the limelight, for the perquisites of office rather than for pure service. Such ambition is not foreign to ecclesiastics, and Milton supplied, in his *Lycidas*, a rather grim commentary on the *ἐριθία* of the clergy of his day:

*How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.*

<sup>1</sup> *An die Römer*, ii, 8.

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*Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;  
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed.*

Or compare Lytton Strachey's bitter comment—whether it was justified or not—on Cardinal Manning's 'faculty for gliding adroitly to the front rank'.<sup>1</sup> All whose main concern in life is to further their own interests, just to 'get on', are the victims of ἐριθία. Self-seeking is a product of that inordinate self-love which, according to Jesus, is the root of all evil.

The word for 'cupidity', 'covetousness' (πλεονεξία, literally 'the desire to have more',) plays a considerable part in the ethical teaching of Paul, as also does the word for a covetous man (πλεονέκτης). As a rule, in Paul, the meaning of the word is the same as in the Gospels, notably in the saying: 'Put to death. . . covetousness, which is idolatry', (Col. iii. 5), where he is evidently thinking of the itch to increase one's material possessions as a form of mammon-worship, absorption in the material side of life to the detriment of spiritual values. But on two occasions, (Eph. iv. 19; v. 5) he links πλεονεξία (or πλεονέκτης) with sins of the flesh, so that the word means also insatiable sexual desire. Even in the previous instance (Col. iii. 5) Moffat translates the word by 'lust', but is hardly justified in so doing. Both meanings are covered by Anderson Scott's suggestion of 'insatiableness' as the most appropriate rendering of the word.<sup>2</sup>

### *5. Bad relations with the others.*

Paul uses a great many words of ethical import when he seeks to correct in his converts wrong attitudes to other people. He

<sup>1</sup> *Eminent Victorians*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *New Testament Ethics*, p. 114.

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bemoans those personal enmities, feuds, (ἔχθραι), which so often arise, frequently in an almost unaccountable way, between two individuals, and embitter their relations with each other. He doubtless felt, as Jesus did, that it is impossible for a man to be on good terms with God if, through his own fault, he is on bad terms with a fellow-creature. He condemns strife, contention, rivalry (ἐρις) and that vicious delight in picking a quarrel which is so painfully characteristic of some people, (φιλονεικία, from φιλέω and νεῖκος, a quarrel). Again and again he attacks jealousy (ζῆλος). The word is probably derived from ζέω, 'boil' and is used in many senses, all of which involve intense feeling, 'heat'. Plato used the word in the good sense of 'emulation'. Paul occasionally uses it in a good sense, meaning 'zeal', but as a rule in his teaching the word means 'jealousy', the unfriendly feeling roused by the spectacle of another's possession of good. ζῆλος has been defined as 'the pain which a man feels at seeing good things in the possession of another like himself, not because the other has them, but because he himself has not.'<sup>1</sup> Such pain is not necessarily vicious for it may be simply a spur to emulate the example of another. Or, again, a rival lover *may* accept his defeat, not without pain indeed, but without any ill-will for the successful suitor, just as it is the essence of good sportsmanship to accept defeat in a game with good grace and readiness to congratulate the winning side, though to be worsted in a contest of any kind naturally involves some pain. But as a rule the pain generates ill-will towards the possessor of the greater good fortune, and that is why ζῆλος so easily degenerates into the vice we call jealousy. It is difficult to distinguish between jealousy and envy (φθόνος), which has been defined as the desire for possession roused by the spectacle of another's possession. When the desire is *active* it leads to *strife* which aims at wresting from that other the desired possession, but when the desire is more or less *passive* it rests content with

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 89.

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maliciously wishing that the good fortune of the other was less, and that results not in strife but in *envy*.<sup>1</sup> Paul also seeks to check what he calls *θυμοί*, a word best rendered by 'outbursts of temper'. The difference between *θυμοί* and *ὀργή*, 'anger', is that the former word denotes passionate outbursts of hostile feeling, while the latter denotes rather a settled and sullen hostility. The passionate outbursts are soon over and no hostility is left behind. Nevertheless such outbursts are to be deplored, for they are sometimes to be numbered amongst the cruellest things in human life. It is small palliation of them to say that they are over in a moment—so is a flash of lightning, but the harm is done. The Master's plea for truthfulness in social intercourse ('Let your yea mean yea') appears in the ethical teaching of Paul in the form of a prohibition of lying, and in the condemnation of all who are faithless to agreements (*ἄσυνθέτους*) or who outwit their fellows by craft (*δόλος*). The only other word that calls for notice is *κακοήθεια* (*κακός, ἡθός*) which means 'malignity', 'malevolence', and consists in a malignant interpretation of the actions of others, the attribution to them of the worst imaginable motives, and the assumption that pure and unadulterated self-interest is the one motive behind all conduct.

### (b) HIS VIEW OF GOOD

#### 1. *The Fruits of the Spirit.*

Paul's views about the 'Good' are most clearly revealed in his account of the Fruits of the Spirit—all of which lie in the ethical realm and thus provide a striking demonstration of the complete fusion of religion and ethics in Pauline thought. His religion was through and through ethical, and his ethics through and through religious. Consequently he declares that the truly spiritual man

<sup>1</sup> See Trench, *New Testament Synonyms*, pp. 82 ff.

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bears rich ethical fruit. It is almost startling to discover that when Paul describes the effects of the working of the Spirit in man's inner life, he does not refer to anything specifically religious, such as preaching power or unction in prayer or successful evangelism—though it must never be overlooked that he regarded capacity in these specifically religious tasks as a spiritual gift (*χάρισμα*)—but appeals solely to ethical qualities. This limitation is doubtless due to the fact that he is contrasting the way of the flesh with the way of the Spirit, and so confines himself to purely ethical considerations.

*Love* (*ἀγάπη*). The distinction between *ἀγάπη* on the one hand and *ἔρως*, *φιλία*, and *στοργή* on the other has already been dealt with. *Ἀγάπη* refers to the consideration and care for man which are based on a lively recognition of human value and of the sacredness of human personality, and which are characterised by the active desire to confer benefits. When such Christian love is genuine and has risen to its full stature, it is literally, as Drummond suggested, the greatest thing in the world. It is *wide*, for it acknowledges no barriers of sex or social status or culture or nationality or race, but, like the all-inclusive love of God, embraces mankind. It is *deep*, for neither the baseness nor the ingratitude of man can ever destroy it, so that the true Christian, unlike many a merely humanistic idealist, never degenerates into a cynic. It is prepared to go to any *lengths*, for it does not count the cost of service, but spends itself and is spent freely in sacrificial efforts to promote the highest good of man. It rises to great *heights*, for it can inspire a magnanimity that is sublime, like that of God Who causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. It was such love that put the warm glow of passion into the Apostle's universalism—so different a thing from the rather cold cosmopolitanism of the Stoics; that enabled him to persevere in the face of discouragements and disappointments which would otherwise have broken even his indomitable

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spirit; that rendered him capable of giving his all to the devoted service of mankind; and that inspired him with that dynamic idealism which is one of the most conspicuous features of his life.

Paul's Ode to Love (1 Cor. xiii.) will never perish, and people who appreciate nothing else in Paul frequently set great store by that. 'Love is long-tempered, behaves in kindly fashion; love knows no jealousy; love is not vainglorious, does not put on airs, does not behave unmannerly, does not seek its own interests, does not yield to provocation, bears no resentment; rejoices not over the wrong-doing of others but rejoices with their goodness; it is always slow to expose, always ready to believe the best, never loses heart'.

The love which he thus celebrates in song was active in his life, though he was no mere sentimentalist and could be something of a martinet. It inspired his tender care and solicitude for the runaway slave, Onesimus; his zeal for the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem which, he trusted, would prove a cement to unite the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Christian Church—'only they would that I should remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do', (Gal. ii. 10). It was love that lay behind his noble request that the man who had insulted him at Corinth should be forgiven: 'this censure by the majority is severe enough for the individual in question, so that instead of censuring him further you should now forgive and comfort him, lest perchance the man be overwhelmed with excessive remorse. So I beseech you to reinstate him in your love', (2 Cor. ii. 6ff.). However justified, on occasion, anger may be, it must be held in leash by love, 'let not the sun go down on your irritation', (Eph. iv. 26). It was to the active exercise of love that he called the Galatians when he wrote: 'Brothers, even if a man be overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual lead him back to the path of Christian virtue in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted', (Gal. vi. 1)—a passage which recalls our Lord's

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treatment of the woman taken in adultery. He held that when Christian people forgave one another they were emitting a ray of that beam of heavenly love which appeared in God's gracious forgiveness of them, (Eph. iv. 32), and that only as they had love could they 'clothe themselves with compassion', (Col. iii. 12). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that he should have placed love first in the list of the fruits of the Spirit and exalted it above ecstasy and preaching-power and spiritual insight and knowledge as the veritable Queen of all Christian Graces, and as the spiritual gift that never fades away.

*Joy* (χαρά). At first sight 'joy' seems to have little or no connection with ethics. But joy that has a religious basis is a very different thing from what commonly bears the name. Such joy is not mere mirth, for a man may be a humourist and yet deep down in his heart he may hold the bitterest and most cynical views about life. Mark Twain, for example, was world-renowned for his humour and yet summed up the meaning of life in the blackest words ever penned: 'The burden of pain, care, misery, grows heavier year by year; at length ambition is dead; pride is dead; vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they achieved nothing, where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they left no sign that they ever existed—a world which will lament them a day and forget them for ever.'<sup>1</sup> Nor is it mere *joie de vivre*, for that is of purely physical origin—born of a body that functions properly, and largely an affair of the glands, something that lambs and kittens and healthy children possess in common, mere animal joy. Nor again is it the joy derived from highly privileged circumstances (εὐδαιμονία) or mere pleasure (ἡδονή), 'the word joy implies the presence of an objective reality which claims the self in its entirety and gives the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, p. 33.

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self total satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> It is the sense that life means intensely and means good, and that sense has a religious basis, and gives rise, on the purely ethical side, to the unquenchable conviction that all that is meant by goodness is infinitely worth while.<sup>2</sup>

*Peace* (εἰρήνη). Here the reference is primarily to that tranquility of mind based on the consciousness of a right relation to God—'Now therefore that we have been justified by faith let us continue to enjoy peace with God', (Rom. v. 1). 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee', (Is. xxvi. 3). In that sense, the issue raised is a religious one. On its purely ethical side, such peace is the sign of a clear conscience. One of the most remarkable facts of the ethical life is that a man can often face disastrous events with perfect tranquility of mind and heart when he knows that he has acted on the side of the right and good.

*Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a hermitage.<sup>3</sup>*

*Good Temper* (μακροθυμία). The word means 'long-temperedness' and refers to the endurance of wrong and exasperating conduct on the part of others without flying into a rage or passionately desiring vengeance. One of the great ethical qualities of God celebrated in Holy Scripture is that He is 'slow to anger', and Paul here suggests that the spiritual man shares in this characteristic of God. That there are times when a man ought to be angry and fails lamentably in his ethical duty if he is not angry, is obvious. To be able to witness cruelty and wrong unmoved to anger is a

<sup>1</sup> Dean Sperry, *Reality in Worship*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dean Inge: "'Joy" as a moral quality is a Christian invention, as a study of the usage of χαρά in Greek will show. Even in Augustine's time the temper of Christians, "serena et non dissolute hilaris", was one of the things which attracted him to the Church.'—*Outspoken Essays*, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Lovelace.



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sign of grave moral weakness. Anger is wrong in itself only when it is a mere impulsive, instinctive, animal reaction, comparable to a dog's bite or a cat's scratch, that is, when it is mere spiteful resentment of something that we personally dislike. Anger of a deeper and deadlier form is found in cynicism which is always an expression of impatience and disgust with human kind, like that of Jonathan Swift when he described human beings as 'odious pernicious vermin' or that of Frederick the Great when he spoke of 'this damned human race'. It is only too easy for the natural man to lose all patience with mankind. But the spiritual man is long-tempered. Even when anger is justified, his anger is slow to rise, is never excessive, and is appeased as soon as the position warrants. Without much long-temperedness we cannot 'put up with one another', (Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 13; cf. Mk. ix. 19).

*Kindness* (*χρηστότης*). The primary meaning of the word (from *χράομαι*) is usefulness, serviceableness, but as applied to persons it always means goodness and kindness of heart. The word is thus akin to *φιλοστοργία*, 'affection' and to *φιλανθρωπία* 'love of mankind'. Paul implies that whatever a man may profess in the way of spirituality, his spirituality is spurious and counterfeit if he fails in kindness to his fellow-men. As Wheeler Robinson points out, for Jesus 'the one thing that matters is how men stand with God, and the one test of that is how they stand with men.'<sup>1</sup> Precisely the same might be said of Paul.

Humaneness is one of the distinguishing features of the spiritual man. It is significant that the first act of the Philippian gaoler after his conversion was to wash the stripes of Paul and Silas. One of the most glorious features of early Christianity was that it introduced a new kindness into the world—kindness to little children by which infant-exposure was condemned and eventually made a criminal offence; kindness to the poor and destitute and plague-stricken; kindness to woman who was given her rightful place

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, p. 121.

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in society; kindness to the common slave who was treated not as a being of inferior clay but as a brother-man; kindness to men of alien race who were deemed fellow-members of the family of God; kindness that led in due course to the abolition of gladiatorial combats. In the Middle Ages the Franciscan Friars set out to serve men as their brothers and were conspicuous for their Christlike kindness to multitudes of unfortunate people for whom this fierce cold world had neither sympathy nor pity—they counted 'their lives well spent if they could bring comfort to a single human soul'.<sup>1</sup> The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century gave birth to a great humanitarian movement which resulted in the rise of modern missionary enterprise, the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, the emancipation of all slaves in the British Empire in 1833, in the formation of Royal Societies for the prevention of cruelty to children and animals, in prison reform, in sweeping away child-labour from mills and mines, in humanising the relations between the white man and his black brothers—in short, it let loose a veritable flood of kindness on the world.

So in the case of individuals, genuine conversion always leads to the display of a kindlier spirit towards men. What Wordsworth says of Peter Bell could be said of many a convert:

*His heart is opening more and more,  
A holy sense pervades his mind;  
He feels what he for human kind  
Had never felt before.*

Kindness is not only a result of conversion, it is sometimes a contributory cause of the conversion of others. When Augustine went to Milan, he was still wild and dissolute, and passing through phase after phase of non-Christian and anti-Christian thought. But Bishop Ambrose showed him no small kindness. Though for

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of England*, Vol. I, p. 191.

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a time, Augustine did not care a straw for the Bishop's preaching, yet he says: 'And I began to love him, not at first as a teacher of the truth, which I despaired of finding in Thy Church, but as a fellow-creature who was kind to me.'<sup>1</sup> As William Booth was aware, often enough the first step towards the reclamation of a wastrel is to show him a kindness which convinces him that there is at least somebody in the world who cares whether he sinks or swims. The fact that kindliness is so often instrumental in leading a more or less abandoned man back to himself and to God is profoundly significant. It means that by being the recipient of kindness he is convinced that he is *not God-forsaken*, so that the kindliness of a fellow-creature is spontaneously interpreted as a manifestation of the love of God—and with that interpretation Paul would agree.

*Goodness* (ἀγαθωσύνη). The word refers to goodness of heart and that goodness of will which Kant declared to be the only intrinsically good thing in the world. Goodness is far more than righteousness, for a man can be righteous without being good—he may be the soul of honour, industrious, chaste, reliable and even then not attractive but even forbidding in his rectitude. Many of the old Puritans were very righteous but they were not good—they were too stern, too harsh in their condemnation of those who did not come up to their moral standards. Men who are simply righteous never inspire devotion in others, while good men do. This distinction is very clearly brought out by Paul himself: 'For scarcely for the sake of a righteous man will anybody die, yet perhaps for the sake of a good man somebody would even venture to die', (Rom. v. 7). The main cause of the collision between Jesus and the Pharisees was that, while they were standing for righteousness, He was out for goodness. As Dr. Tennant has said: 'The Christian ideal of perfection in character and conduct is unique. It is the "good" rather than the "right"'. This ideal contains emotional as well as volitional elements; includes the ethically

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, Book V, Ch. xiii.

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beautiful as well as the morally meritorious, or the admirable as well as the imperative.<sup>1</sup> The good man has all the moral virtues of the righteous man *plus* a concern for others, a genial goodwill, a friendliness, a readiness to exert himself for others, a kindness and a charity in dealing with men's faults and failings, an eagerness to do more than is absolutely required of him, and a willingness to help lame dogs over stiles—in short, his righteousness, enhanced and made attractive by being permeated with love, is transformed into goodness.

*Fidelity—or Reliability*—(πίστις). It is very unfortunate that this word has been rendered 'faith' in the A. V. (The R. V. has rightly substituted 'faithfulness'). The word πίστις is used in two senses in the New Testament, one active and the other passive. In the active sense it means 'trust', 'faith'; in the passive sense it means 'trustworthiness'. The corresponding adjective πιστός in the active sense means 'believing', 'trustful'; while in the passive sense it means 'believed' and, therefore, 'trustworthy', 'reliable'. πίστις as 'faith' is the root of the spiritual life, while πιστός as 'fidelity' is one of its fruits. The implication is that the spiritual man is one who can be relied upon. On this matter Paul was very sensitive. Owing to enforced changes in his plans, he had been accused of unreliability by certain members of the Corinthian Church, and he replied to the charge in a most spirited way: 'Did I then to some extent display levity? When I make my plans, do I make them like a man of the world, so that in my case, "yes, yes" and "no, no" occur together? As surely as God is reliable (πιστός), my word to you is not "yes" and "no" at the same time', (2 Cor. i. 17). He pointed out what was required of a steward was that he should be 'reliable', and again and again he referred to tried and trusted fellow-workers as 'reliable'. It was no small part of a worker's reliability that he displayed steadfastness (ὑπομονή), and maintained his tenacity of purpose in the teeth of disappoint-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted, Anderson Scott, *Christianity according to St. Paul*, p. 217.

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ment and disillusionment and did not prove a 'Mr. Faint-heart' or a 'Mr. Short-wind' by quickly growing weary in well-doing. Those words: 'In every way we are hard-pressed but not crushed; in difficulties, but not in despair; persecuted by men, but not forsaken by God; struck down, but not destroyed', (2 Cor. iv. 8f.), are magnificent testimony to Paul's own utter reliability as a worker in the Christian cause.

This quality of reliability is revealed no less in the spiritual man's honour and integrity. The validity of Paul's argument here can be best appreciated by appealing to the witness of the Quakers. It is surely a significant thing that the very section of the Christian Church which has laid most stress on the Spirit and claims to live by the Spirit should be renowned throughout the world for a remarkably high standard of honour. The personal honour of the Quakers was a characteristic which soon became well-known, and was acknowledged even by the enemies who persecuted them. When they were committed to prison, they were frequently left unguarded—their simple word was deemed sufficient security. When they were transferred from one prison to another, they were often sent without escort—their simple promise was accepted as absolutely reliable.<sup>1</sup> In trade and commerce, no written agreement was necessary with a Quaker—his bare word was his bond. As Colonists they never seized by force already occupied land—whatever land they took from the Indians they paid for strip by strip. All their treaties with the Indians were strictly observed—the pledged word was always honoured. When, for example, William Penn was in desperate need of funds and was offered £6,000 for a trade monopoly, he refused the offer because such a monopoly would have involved a breach of his contract with the Indians. Similarly, of John Woolman it has been remarked that he was a man with a single soul whose conscience dictated all he did. The same sense of honour pervades their re-

<sup>1</sup> See W. B. Selbie (editor), *Evangelical Christianity*, p. 186.

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ligious teaching, so that it has been said that they are the only religious body that has never discouraged straight thinking.<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, too, testifies to the high standard of honour which resulted from his spiritual awakening: 'But all this while, as to the act of sinning, I was never more tender than now. I durst not take a pin or a stick, though but so big as a straw, for my conscience was now sore, and would smart at every touch'.<sup>2</sup>

*Gentleness* (πραότης). The significance of this word has already been discussed in connection with the ethical teaching of Jesus. Of the two elements in it, (1) consideration for others and (2) willingness to waive an undoubted right, the latter is very prominent in the teaching of Paul, though the former is by no means absent, (see Gal. vi. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 33; xii. 14-15; Phil. ii. 4).

It was this virtue of πραότης that led Paul voluntarily to renounce his right to live at the expense of the Churches which he served. While he insisted that he had the right, and in support of his case appealed to the witness both of the Old Testament and of Jesus, he nevertheless decided to forego the right, for the Gospel's sake—for he was convinced that he could serve the Christian cause better by preaching free of charge (1 Cor. ix. 18). Further, he did not hesitate to call on other people to renounce their rights if thereby they could better aid the Church of Christ. He freely admitted that the 'enlightened' Christians at Corinth had a perfect right to make use of meat that had been sacrificed in heathen temples, but he urged that this right should not be exercised in contemptuous disregard of the feelings of the foolishly scrupulous Christian people who believed that it was wrong for them to eat such meat—they supposed that because of its association with heathen temples it was tainted by demons. He took exactly the same line in dealing with the similar case in the Church at Rome. He conceded the Christian's right to eat meat and to drink wine,

<sup>1</sup> Crighton-Miller, *Psychology and the Preacher*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Grace Abounding*, Oxford Edition, p. 319.

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but urged that no Christian should ever exercise his right in the matter without the least regard for the feelings of those who were of the opinion that a Christian should be a vegetarian and a total abstainer. 'For if because of thy food thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love'. (Rom. xiv. 15)—a plea for that gentleness and considerateness which is a fruit of the Spirit.

These particular cases probably make no appeal to the modern man, but the principle involved is of far-reaching importance. A fine, delicate regard for the feelings of others in all circumstances is a mark of the Christian gentleman.

*Self-control* (ἐγκράτεια, from ἐν and κράτος). The reference here is to self-mastery over all one's desires and impulses (not simply sexual). In view of the modern use of the word, the ordinary English translation 'temperance' is not satisfactory, for to most minds it suggests only the question of alcohol. What Paul has in mind, therefore, is the general question of self-control, which he regards as characteristic of the spiritual man. According to Sir Arthur Thomson, the animals of the sea can be divided into two classes—swimmers and drifters<sup>1</sup>: the former largely decide for themselves the course they take, the latter have their course decided for them by circumstances which they are too inert to resist or even to modify. So it is with men and women—some have their conduct largely decided for them by mere instinctive drives, they do as natural impulse dictates. Others control their instinctive drives instead of being the slaves of their natural impulses. The instincts are of themselves neither good nor bad. They are simply the raw material out of which we make things good or evil. Every instinctive drive can be as truly an occasion of virtue as of vice. The man whose raw instincts determine his behaviour sinks to the level of the animal world. Only as man controls and directs his instinctive energies can he rise in the ethical scale. The modern 'self-expression' idea, the notion that it is injurious to the

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution*, p. 123.

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self not to let the instincts have their way exactly as they please, ('Do what you will', 'Gott ist tot, alles ist erlaubt'), would obviously, if it were generally adopted and followed, make social life impossible, and lead to universal anarchy. Even from the evolutionary point of view, such a policy would soon prove fatal: 'the blinder the response to stimulus, the lower the rate of individual survival—such is the law of the evolution of life'.<sup>1</sup> It is only as we become persons that we can ever possess real freedom, and we can become persons only as we ourselves become the controlling and directing centre of our instinctive impulses and passions. As C. G. Jung says: 'It is not the children of the flesh, but "the children of God" who know freedom. . . We moderns are faced with the necessity of rediscovering the life of the spirit; we must experience it anew for ourselves. It is the only way in which we can break the spell that binds us to the cycle of biological events'.<sup>2</sup>

Harnack maintains that for the early Christians virtue was summed up in two words, self-control and brotherly love.<sup>3</sup> In a world where vice, debauchery, greed, brutal self-assertion, vindictiveness and racial feuds were rife, (as a result of yielding to the dictates of mere instinctive drives), Christians were characterised by chastity, sobriety, unselfishness, gentleness, kindness, the forgiving spirit, and philanthropy, (as a result of the mastery and re-direction of instinctive drives through the self-control born of the Spirit).

To sum up, as Anderson Scott states: 'At the heart of this experience of the Spirit's power he finds a loving disposition, a glad heart, a quiet mind. These can be known only to the subject'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. R. Marett, *An Outline of Modern Knowledge*, p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Dogmengeschichte* (Grundriss), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> This is decidedly an over-statement, especially in the case of a 'loving disposition', which is surely known to others than the subject; and the same is true, to a less extent, both of 'a glad heart', and 'a quiet mind'.



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Nearer to the surface are good-temper, good-feeling, good-will; and on the surface of conduct are good-faith or honour, deference to others and self-control.<sup>1</sup> Thus Paul makes spiritual experience the fount and spring of the virtuous life and has taught men that 'morality in the full sense and in its highest power blossoms only in the warm sunshine of religious enthusiasm. . . No longer does "Thou shalt" rule over men, but "I will"; as the blossom grows out of the bud and the fruit out of the blossom, so morality grows out of the transformed man. . . There are not two souls living in the Christian's breast, but one single new man. Morality and inclination are here reconciled in the warmth of religious inspiration. Such was the meaning of Jesus and Paul. That was what Luther discovered again. And a man like Angelus Silesius is not far from the Kingdom of God when in the affected style of his day he says: To ask why a Christian is pious, righteous and free is like asking why a lamb is not a tiger, or when he gives a new turn to this experience and clothes a deep feeling of genuine goodness in the words: the rose asks not why, it blooms because it blooms, it pays no attention to itself and does not ask if anybody sees it. "It blooms because it blooms": that is Christian morality, which has overcome all legality.'<sup>2</sup> Once again it is made abundantly clear that, wherever classical Christian experience is concerned, external controls are off and internal controls are on.

### *2. The Things to keep in Mind.*

Another passage which throws considerable light on Paul's conception of the good is the one rendered in the familiar words of the A. V. thus: 'Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true (ἀληθῆ), whatsoever things are honest (σεμνά), whatsoever things are just (δίκαια), whatsoever things are pure (ἀγνά), whatsoever things are lovely (προσφιλῆ), whatsoever things are of good

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> H. Weinel, *Paulus*, p. 104.

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report (εὐφημα); if there be any virtue (ἀρετή), and if there be any praise (ἔπαινος), think on (λογίζεσθε) these things', (Phil. iv. 8). This translation is at several points inadequate and thus fails to make clear what Paul had in mind.

To think in terms of what is 'true' is not a matter of mere truthfulness as Bengel suggests by his 'vera, in sermone', but true speaking, true thinking, true dealing, utter honesty and sincerity. The word σεμνά can hardly be adequately represented in modern English by 'honest', (though the Latin word *honestus* expresses the meaning well), or even by the 'honourable' of the R. V. It comes from σέβομαι, 'worship', and so means reverend, venerable, august, dignified. The best equivalent in modern English is 'worthy of honour'. To think in terms of what is 'just' is to think in terms of the loftiest conception of right. The word ἀγνά, 'pure' is derived from ἄγος, religious awe, the cognate verb being ἄζομαι, stand in awe of. Thus the original meaning was 'that which awakens religious awe', and so the word was akin to ἅγιος, consecrated. But the purely religious meaning of the word faded early and it came to refer to what was morally absolutely undefiled. In the New Testament it implies complete moral purity and sincerity. Though it naturally embraces the idea of freedom from sexual sin, it is not exhausted by that, but refers to ethical purity in the widest sense, moral blamelessness, freedom from all that defiles.

The primary meaning of the word προσφιλή is 'love inspiring', 'drawing out love to itself', and so it came to mean 'pleasing', 'agreeable'. Moffatt renders the word by 'attractive' and the New Testament in Basic English by 'beautiful'. As the word 'attractive' is ethically neutral, for we may perversely find evil things attractive, the rendering 'beautiful' is to be preferred. (cf. Greek τὸ καλόν).

Both the A. V. and the R. V. have failed to express the meaning of εὐφημα by 'of good report', for the word means 'well-speaking'

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rather than 'well spoken of'. In classical Greek the adjective was applied to words and sounds of good omen, and thus it came to mean 'auspicious', 'fair-sounding'. Moffatt's rendering 'high-toned', that is, ethically fair-sounding, is the best possible English equivalent.

The word ἀρετή played a big part in Greek Ethics. Primarily it meant courage in war, and is probably derived from ἄρης, Mars, (though a derivation from ἀρέσκω, 'please' has been suggested<sup>1</sup>), but it came to mean to the Greeks moral excellence of any kind. Lightfoot thinks that as Paul uses the word here only, he means 'whatever value may reside in your old heathen conception of virtue'. It is certainly one of the great terms of heathen ethics, and 'moral excellence' is, perhaps, the best rendering.

To render the word ἔπαινος simply as 'praise' is not satisfactory. As Preisker points out, this is the one passage in the New Testament in which the word is used in its classical sense of universal human approval,<sup>2</sup> so that what Paul means is 'whatever is generally deemed worthy of praise'.

We may, therefore, render the passage thus: 'Finally, brothers, whatsoever is straightforward, whatsoever is worthy of honour, whatsoever is right, whatsoever is undefiled, whatsoever is beautiful, whatsoever is high-toned, if there be any moral excellence, if there be anything that deserves praise, take these things into your reckoning'. That to occupy the mind with such thoughts as these is to elevate the life is clear, for as Tennyson's Ancient Sage says: 'And more—think well! Do well will follow thought'. The thoughts we habitually think exercise a profound influence on character.

#### 3. *Graciousness* (ἐπιεικία).

When the general reader of the New Testament comes across the passage: 'Let your moderation be known to all men', he is often

<sup>1</sup> *M.M.* s.v.

<sup>2</sup> *T.W.N.T.*, Vol. II, p. 584.

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puzzled to know what is meant by 'moderation'. The question raised is a difficult one, for the exact significance of the Greek noun *ἐπιεικία* and the corresponding adjective *ἐπιεικής* is not easy to decide. The difficulty can best be illustrated by arranging in tabular form some of the attempted translations:

	<i>A. V.</i>	<i>R. V.</i>	<i>Moffatt</i>
Acts xxiv. 4	clemency	clemency	courtesy
2 Cor. x. 1	gentleness	gentleness	consideration
Phil. iv. 5	moderation	forbearance	forbearance
1 Tim. iii. 3	patient	gentle	lenient
Tit. iii. 2	gentle <sup>1</sup>	gentle	conciliatory
Jas. iii. 17	gentle	gentle	forbearing
1 Pet. ii. 18	gentle	gentle	reasonable

Anderson Scott suggests 'magnanimity'.<sup>2</sup>

The usual derivation is from *εἰκός*, 'reasonable', but as Moulton and Milligan admit, the word *ἐπιεικία* 'is a very elusive term, and is by no means always the equivalent of "sweet reasonableness"'. Preisker points out that some meanings of the word imply a derivation from *εἴκω*, 'yield'<sup>3</sup>, though he admits that the etymology of the word is a difficult problem.

In his *Ethics*, Aristotle frequently uses the word *ἐπιεικία* in a sense indistinguishable from 'goodness'. In one passage<sup>4</sup> there is a long discussion as to the difference between a man who is merely just (*δίκαιος*) and the man who is equitable (*ἐπιεικής*). The man who is merely just stands rigidly for the letter of the law, but the man who is equitable (*ἐπιεικής*) recognises that laws are framed on general principles and do not take particular cases and extenuating circumstances into account, and consequently he is ready to interpret the letter of the law according to its spirit and

A suitable translation of *πρᾶος*, but not of *ἐπιεικής*.

<sup>2</sup> *N.T. Ethics*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *T.W.N.T.*, Vol. II, p. 585.

<sup>4</sup> *Nic. Eth.* V, x.

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to make allowances where the situation seems to require it—just as a modern magistrate would refuse to proceed with the full rigour of the law against some impecunious widow who had stolen food for her starving children. Thus Aristotle regards the equitable man as superior to the merely just man. This suggests that *ἐπιεικία* means (in part) willingness to make concessions, mildness, leniency. There is an excellent example of this meaning of *ἐπιεικής* in the LXX: 'For thou, O Lord, art good and ready to forgive (*ἐπιεικής*), and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee', (Ps. lxxxvi. 5). Here the Greek translators rendered the Hebrew word *סָלַח* 'ready to forgive' by *ἐπιεικής*. In this sense of the word, the idea of 'mildness' is very prominent. It comes out in yet another way in Josephus' account of the generous treatment of a royal prisoner of war by the Parthians: 'But when Hyrcanus was brought into Parthia, the King Phraates treated him in a very gentle manner, (*ἐπιεικέστερον*).'<sup>1</sup> In Greek literature the phrase *ἐπιεικῶς ἔχειν πρὸς τινά* means 'to treat someone mildly', and the man who is *ἐπιεικής* is contrasted with the man who is violent (*ὕβριστής*).

The man who is *ἐπιεικής* is not only mild in his attitude to others but just as mild in his demands for himself, for Aristotle declares that taking less than one's due is characteristic of him.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle's view of *ἐπιεικία* has been summed up by Mayor thus: 'It is to pardon human failings, and to look to the law-giver and not to the law, to the spirit and not to the letter, to the intention and not to the act, to the whole and not to the part, to remember good rather than evil.'<sup>3</sup>

To conclude: 'Magnanimity' does not seem to be quite the right meaning, since it implies generosity to a person by whom one has been wronged, and *ἐπιεικία* can be exercised in other circum-

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* XV, ii, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Nic Eth.* V, ix, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Epistle of James*, p. 126.

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stances than those. The essential meaning of the word is fair-mindedness, the attitude of a man who is charitable towards men's faults and merciful in his judgment of their failings because he takes their whole situation into his reckoning. 'Graciousness' seems to be the one English word that is its nearest equivalent. The *ἐπιεικία* of Jesus was never more wondrously displayed than in the prayer from the cross: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. Well, then, might Paul say, 'I beseech you through the considerateness and the graciousness of Christ'. 'Let your graciousness be known to all men'.

We can now sum up Paul's conception of the good man: he is one who is a great active lover of mankind, who cherishes the joyful conviction that goodness is always infinitely worth while, who displays the serenity of mind and heart that comes from a clear conscience; who is long-tempered, full of the milk of human kindness, rich in goodwill; who can be absolutely relied upon in word and deed, in fair weather or in foul; who is considerate of the feelings and interests of others, who has gained such mastery of all his instinctive passions and impulses that he has himself completely under control; one who occupies his mind with the things that are straightforward, worthy of honour, right, undefiled, high-toned, in short, with all that appertains to moral excellence and all that is deserving of praise; one who is always ready to temper justice with mercy, to make whatever allowances he can, and never to act from mere unreasoning prejudice and passion. If that is the Christian ethical ideal, can anybody deny the relevance of Christianity to the modern world? If that is the ethical fruit of the salvation that Christianity offers, can anybody reasonably neglect so great salvation? Such, then, was the ethical goal Paul had in mind for himself, but he would have been careful to add: 'Not that I have already attained or have already been made perfect, but I press on toward the mark for the prize of the call "Come up!" addressed to me by God in Christ Jesus'.

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### (c) HIS ETHICAL APPEALS

In order to quicken the ethical sense of his converts, Paul's appeals were many and varied. Occasionally he appealed to the ethical teaching of the Old Testament, notably in the case of the fifth commandment, (Eph. vi. 2). He clearly regarded a word of the Lord as decisive on any ethical problem—in that way he settled the question of divorce, (1 Cor. vii. 10) and established the right of those who proclaim the Gospel to live of the Gospel (1 Cor. ix. 14)—evidently a reference to the word of Jesus, 'the labourer is worthy of his hire' (Lk. x. 7; cf. Mt. x. 10). All the way through the ethical teaching of the Apostle, there are echoes of the teaching of Jesus—especially in Romans xii. According to Luke's account in the Acts, in his address at Miletus, Paul reinforced his appeal to the leaders of the Church to help the weak by quoting an otherwise unknown saying of Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive', (Acts xx. 35). He urged his converts to imitate the example of God in the matter of forgiveness: 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you. Prove yourselves, therefore, imitators of God, as his beloved children', (Eph. iv. 32 and v. 1—two verses which should never have been separated by chapter division). His appeals to the example of Christ have already been noted in other connections. On the principle of the Arab proverb 'A fig tree looking on a fig tree becometh fruitful', he did not even hesitate to appeal to his own example—and it is a well-known fact that moral exhortation is more efficacious in the form of example than of precept, for a virtue incarnate in a human being is more likely to kindle virtue in others than the most eloquent ethical discourse. When he wished to inspire his converts to be independent and self-supporting in the matter of livelihood, he could fairly refer to his own great example in that respect, (11 Thess. iii. 7f.). When he wanted to check those who cham-

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pioned their own opinions and interests to the detriment of the Church as a whole, he could proudly claim that such, at any rate, was not *his* practice. 'Prove yourselves imitators of me, as I for my part am an imitator of Christ', (1 Cor. xi. 1). 'What you have learned and received from me, what you have heard me say and seen me do, practise these things and the God of peace be with you'. (Phil. iv. 9). But Paul had other modes of appeal less obvious and of great ethical interest.

### *1. Christian Self-respect.*

He frequently pointed out that there were certain things which were quite incompatible with the profession of the Christian faith and, therefore, out of place in a Christian. In this connection he uses two words—ἀνήκοντα and καθήκοντα in the sense of 'things fitting'. The verb ἀνέκω means 'come up' and καθέκω 'come down', but both verbs were used in the participial form in the sense of 'fitting', 'due', 'right'. Such a meaning is by no means confined to biblical Greek, but was frequent in the Koine, as the papyri and inscriptions prove; for example, τῶν ἀνηκόντων τῇ πόλει Μαγνήτων 'qualities which a man belonging to the city of the Magnesians ought to show'. Similarly Menander writes: 'Understand quite clearly that it is my own character and not any word of yours which persuades me to do what is fitting (τὸ καθήκον).'<sup>1</sup>

These two words refer to the things which decency, honour, and ordinary self-respect require. Paul appeals again and again to the Christian self-respect of his converts and uses these words positively to suggest the kind of conduct which alone befits a Christian, and negatively to suggest the kind of conduct which a Christian should regard as beneath him. 'As for fornication or any kind of impurity or insatiable lust, let it not even be mentioned among you, as befits consecrated people; the same applies to foul language, inane chatter, and scurrilous jesting—things

<sup>1</sup> M.M., s.v.



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which are not becoming', (Eph. v. 3f.). When he pleads with Philemon to take back Onesimus as a brother, he points out that he prefers to appeal to him on the ground of love, though he might order him to do the right and fitting thing (v. 8). After describing the horrible vices which disfigured Graeco-Roman society, he pronounces them 'infra dig.' for men to do (τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα). The same appeal to self-respect is seen in the call to Christians to conduct themselves as children of light (Eph. v. 8) and not as the heathen (Eph. iv. 17).

This appeal to Christian self-respect can prove on occasion very powerful, a call to be 'loyal to the royal in thyself', to realise that there are things which for very shame one can never do, and other things which one should spontaneously feel in duty bound to do.

### *2. The General Good.*

It is a very common idea that it is always quite permissible to act in any way that is judged right at the bar of conscience. That idea Paul flatly denied, and insisted that a further question needs to be asked, namely, 'Granted that what you propose to do is not in itself morally wrong but, on the contrary, emphatically right, nevertheless if you do it, will it or will it not promote the general good of the community, especially of the Church to which you belong?' This idea Paul expresses by the use of the word *συμφέρει* or *τὸ σύμφερον*. The usual translation is: 'All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient', (1 Cor. vi. 12; x. 23). Unfortunately the word 'expedient' is now an ethically tainted word and suggests a more or less base compromise with principle for the sake of some practical selfish advantage. Moral principles are often thrown to the winds both in private and public life on the ground that it is not expedient to apply them to some particular situation. So to get at Paul's thought the word 'expedient' must be jettisoned. The famous saying may, therefore, be rendered

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thus: 'All things (right in themselves) are permissible, but such things do not always promote the general well-being'. The question which Paul is discussing here, namely, that of the rightness or wrongness of the eating of sacrificial meat by Christian people, is now dead, but his actual discussion of it yields an important ethical principle, an act right in itself ought not to be done if the doing of it will be unnecessarily hurtful to others. A Kantian rigoristic ethics that admitted no exceptions would often prove harmful. A doctor who insisted that he must always tell the plain truth—a very good general rule—might often kill a patient, who, under more tactful treatment, would recover. A man who is convinced that a certain policy is sound and that he is called of God to urge it on his fellows, ought not to press the matter ruthlessly and without regard to the opinions and feelings of people who do not yet share his vision; it may be his duty to wait until he has led people to see with their own eyes what he already sees with his.

### 3. *Correct Form.*

Paul frequently appeals for what may be called 'Christian good form'. He urges the Christian to be *εὐσχήμων* and to behave *εὐσχημόνως*. In the social sense, *εὐσχήμων* means 'influential', 'well-to-do', 'of good position'. Thus Joseph of Arimathea is described as *εὐσχήμων*, and Luke tells us that when Paul's mission at Antioch was making progress, the Jews incited against him 'devout women of honourable estate', (*εὐσχήμονας*, Acts xiii. 50). In the aesthetic sense the word refers to 'comeliness', for example, 'and our uncomely parts (*ἀσχήμονα*) have more abundant comeliness (*εὐσχημοσύνην*)', (I Cor. xii. 23)—the meaning being that the non-presentable parts of the body are made presentable by fine clothing. In the ethical sense the word means 'morally free from objection'.<sup>1</sup> Paul assumed and acknowledged

<sup>1</sup> Greeven, *T.W.N.T.*, Vol. II, p. 769.

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that the heathen had a knowledge of moral standards, and when he pleads with his converts to behave *εὐσχημόνως*, he is thinking primarily of conduct to which their pagan neighbours could take no exception. He felt that it would be a lamentable thing if the heathen could justly criticise Christians on moral grounds. This comes out very clearly in the saying: 'that you may behave correctly (*εὐσχημόνως*) in the eyes of the outside world', (1 Thess. iv. 12). He was afraid, too, that the disorder in the services of the Church at Corinth would bring Christians into disrepute amongst outsiders who would in consequence regard them as madmen; so he concludes his discussion of the question with the words 'Let everything be done with decorum (*εὐσχημόνως*) and in an orderly way', (1 Cor. xiv. 40). It was doubtless the same desire to avert hostile criticism of the Church by outsiders that led him to insist that women should conform to current etiquette by not appearing at Church services without head-dress, (1 Cor. xi.). Paul was very jealous of the Church's reputation, and so warned Christians against conduct of such a sort as to invite the moral censure even of their pagan neighbours—'let us walk with decorum as in the light of day' (Rom. xiii. 13). After giving the Corinthians a great deal of counsel in regard to such matters as marriage, divorce, and celibacy, he half apologises for so doing by pointing out that he has no desire to dictate to them or to restrict their freedom, but has written frankly on these questions 'to secure decorum', (*πρὸς τὸ εὐσχημον*, 1 Cor. vii. 35), and once again Paul seems to have realised that serious failure in such vitally important matters as these would damage the prestige of Christians in pagan eyes, and bring down upon them pagan censure.

Certain it is still that there is nothing more damaging to the prestige of the Christian Church than behaviour on the part of Church-members that is condemned on ethical grounds by outsiders. For instance, a village shop-keeper once told me that all retailers had signed an agreement to sell a certain article for a

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shilling, and that while he was keeping to his pledged word, another shop-keeper had added three-pence to the price; and then he added caustically: 'He goes to Chapel on Sundays, and I go to the pub!' The man thus criticised was not conducting himself *εὐσχημόνως*!

### 4. *Walking Worthily.*

The idea here is so simple that it calls for little explanation. 'Only live your lives as citizens in a manner that is worthy (*ἀξίως*) of the Gospel of Christ', (Phil. i. 27); 'Walk worthily (*ἀξίως*) of the Lord to his complete satisfaction'. The word *ἀξίως* is derived from the verb *ἄγω* meaning 'weigh', so that *ἀξίως* really means 'bringing up the other scale-pan', that is, 'of equal weight'. Thus in its ethical sense the word means 'corresponding to', 'adequate to'. Christians must 'pull their weight' as Christians, they must 'do their stuff'.

### 5. *Reason.*

Paul often appeals to his converts to be reasonable, to live according to reason. This was the favourite Stoic appeal. It was also the method of Aristotle in his Ethics—his sole appeal was to reason. Such an appeal is typically Greek. Even when the Greek was interested in moral questions, he approached them from the side of reason and not passion. For instance, in Euripides' *Ion* a story is told of a woman who, in a fit of jealousy, tries to poison a youth whom she supposes to be her step-son. The plot is discovered, and so the boy resolves to kill her, till he is checked by the priestess of Apollo. The priestess makes no indignant protest against the wickedness and impiety of such a murder, but just quietly appeals to reason: 'Women, you know, always do hate a step-son'. The boy at once does homage to common sense and lays his ferocity aside.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. W. Livingstone, *The Greek Genius and its Meaning to us*, p. 27.

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Even Paul occasionally makes this typically Greek appeal to reason. 'So don't prove senseless creatures (*ἄφρονες*), but understand what the will of the Lord is', (Eph. v. 17). 'Brothers, don't be children in your wits (*φρεσίν*), by all means be children in malice, but in your wits be grown-up', (1 Cor. xiv. 20). Scores of times Paul makes use of the conditional sentence, and especially of the type in which the condition is taken for granted, so that the inference is inevitable. He thus appeals to his converts to use their logical powers and recognise that a high ethic is the only possible conclusion that can be drawn from the premises of the Christian faith. 'If we live by the Spirit (and we do) let us also be guided in our ethical life by the Spirit', (Gal. v. 25). 'If then you have been raised with Christ (and you have), aim at the things which are above where Christ is'—that is, at the spiritually and ethically high, (Col. iii. 1).

He similarly argues that it is irrational for one who is spiritual to give himself up to fleshly indulgence—for how can a man be simultaneously spiritual and carnal? In fact there is a sense in which all the ethical teaching of the Apostle consists in logical inferences from religious premises.

#### *6. Fear.*

Paul does not hesitate—any more than Jesus did—to appeal to fear. While he recognises that only love is an adequate motive in the ethical and religious life, he does not shrink from the most solemn warnings. He points out that men can 'store up for themselves wrath on the day of wrath', (Rom. ii. 5). The man in the Corinthian Church who had been guilty of incest was to be devoted to Satan 'for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus', (1 Cor. v. 5). He warns the Corinthians against immorality lest they should suffer the fate of the many thousands of Israelites who fell in one day (1 Cor. x, 8). He suggests that misconduct at the Lord's Table had brought ill-

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ness on many, and death to some, (1 Cor. xi. 30). In all these and such like references—and this is, after all, the essential point—there is the recognition that it is undoubtedly a dangerous thing to trifle with the great issues of right and wrong. It is a fact of life—whatever be the explanation of it—that ‘there’s an iron gin that waits for sin’, and that to sow sin is to reap calamity. To deny that fact is sheer blindness and perversity. It is a fact that the consequences of sin are to be feared—as multitudes have discovered bitterly in their own experience, and as all of us have found more or less. If these sombre facts really *are* facts—and they are—there is nothing unethical in warning men of them, and it is foolish and faithless to be squeamish in the matter.

In these varied ways, then, Paul sought to drive right home to the hearts and minds of his converts the ethical implications of their faith. Like his Master, he regarded religion and ethics as indissolubly joined. He believed that a true religion was always accompanied by a high ethic, and that a high ethic can be inspired and sustained only by true religion. And the witness of human experience as a whole proves that in this belief he was quite right.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Paul's ethic was social as well as individual, and it is obvious that there are few Christian virtues which can be practised by a recluse. As Holtzmann says: 'Only in Society can the divine plant of love attain full growth.'<sup>1</sup> Such injunctions as 'Let each consider not simply his own interests but also the interests of others', (Phil. ii. 4), all the characteristics of brotherly love delineated in 1 Cor. xiii., and all the moral exhortations of Romans xii. clearly involve social relations of all sorts. The truth is that the Apostle made a unique contribution to social thought and life.

#### (a) CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL AMELIORATION

It is a remarkable fact that ideas and principles which were originally distinctively and specifically religious have again and again been appropriated by mankind in general and have thus found their way into the stream of the world's ethical thought and practice. The non-religious sections of the community are under a greater obligation than they realise to men and women who became social pioneers as a direct result of their own intense religious experience. Most people throughout the civilised world recognise that there should be hospitals to minister to the needs of the sick poor, but it is often forgotten that the first public hospital was founded in the fourth century by a Christian lady in Rome named Fabiola, and, as Lecky remarks, 'the charity planted by that woman's hand overspread the world, and will alleviate to the end of time, the darkest anguish of humanity.'<sup>2</sup> Similarly the vast

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. ii, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> op. cit. ii, p. 80.

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majority of civilised mankind evince a fine tenderness and sympathy where child-life is concerned, are keen on universal education, uncompromisingly condemn slavery, support prison reform, show solicitude for homeless waifs and strays, and give their blessing to those engaged in the service of the flotsam and jetsam of society. Yet in all these departments it is Christian men and women who have led the way. Often enough, in the first instance, their ideas were pooh-poohed and made the target of scorn and ridicule, but eventually they were adopted by all normal people, while their distinctively Christian origin was forgotten. Many moderns take to themselves all the credit for what beautiful flowers there are in the social life of the world, and are quite oblivious of the miracle and mystery of the seed from which those flowers sprang, seed which was, in the first case, the creation of the Christian ethic—and after all it is a very simple matter to grow flowers when one has the seed! Or, to change the figure, when the genius of the inventor has done its work, the copyist's task is easy.

It is one of the great distinctions of the Apostle Paul that he was instrumental in introducing into the world ideas which, though they seem self-evident to multitudes to-day, were very novel when he first propounded them. He lived in a world—the Graeco-Roman world—which was broken by arbitrary distinctions of many kinds which set men against their fellows, and justified the old Latin proverb which declared that 'man is a wolf to his fellow-men'. Such distinctions, in spite of our Christian civilisation, still persist, but in the Apostle's day they cut far deeper than they do now. The three great lines of cleavage were: race, social status, sex. Gentile hated Jew, and Jew returned the hatred with interest; Romans were prone to dub all non-Romans 'Scythians', (the old equivalent of our 'Hottentots'); the Greeks dismissed all non-Greeks as 'barbarians'; the freedman looked down upon a fellow-creature still in bondage, while the man born free normally despised both the freedman and the slave; man usually regarded



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woman as his inferior and subordinate, his plaything or his drudge. It was these barriers of race and social status and sex which Paul, more than anybody else in the ancient world assaulted and began to break down, and it is in this connection that his social ethic is of such supreme and far-reaching importance. That a Jew, a member of a most exclusive race, should have burst his Jewish bonds and reached out to a genial philanthropy which simply ignored the high and hoary barriers between race and race, nation and nation, class and class, man and woman, is a remarkable fact. How far Paul owed his new insight to the teaching of Jesus it is impossible to say, for though a careful study of his letters reveals a fairly extensive knowledge of that teaching, yet it is not possible to establish exactly how much he knew. That the teaching of Jesus had done something to emancipate him from his native particularism may be taken for granted. Klausner is probably right when he says: 'Had there not been in Jesus' teaching something contrary to the "world-outlook" of Judaism, there never could have arisen out of it a new teaching so irreconcilable with the spirit of Judaism: *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Though Jesus' teaching may not have been deliberately directed against contemporary Judaism, it certainly had within it the germs from which there could and must develop in the course of time a non-Jewish and even an anti-Jewish teaching.'<sup>1</sup> But whatever part the teaching of Jesus may have actually played in this matter, there were other factors at work too—the influence of a cosmopolitan city like Tarsus where he spent his youth, the liberalism of his teacher Gamaliel, and, above all, his experience as a missionary.

### (b) THE SOCIAL WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

In Paul's letters there are two unique passages whose social significance can hardly be over-estimated: 'There is neither Jew

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 9.

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nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus', (Gal. iii. 28). 'Where (that is, in the Kingdom of the New Man) there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all that matters', (Col. iii. 11). What he here affirms is that 'in Christ' the mutual antagonisms which divide mankind die out, and the parties concerned are brought together in unity and concord. He implies that the distinctions commonly drawn by the world are artificial and that 'in Christ' they are abolished. Here he is indulging in no pious hope or mere theoretical speculation, but is dealing with something which he has actually seen happen in the Christian community. He had observed that the Spirit of God made no distinctions of race or social status or sex, but came with all His resultant energies and graces to the Gentile as well as to the Jew, to the 'Scythian' as to the Roman, to the 'barbarian' as to the Greek, to the slave as to the master, to woman as to man. Thus he found direct spiritual evidence of the intrinsic and fundamental equality of all races, of all nations, of all social classes and of both sexes. It was no uncommon thing in the early Church to see men of different nationality and race mixing and mingling harmoniously, to find master and slave behaving like brothers, and to discover that women were as gifted with spiritual insight and understanding as men. All who were 'in Christ' showed themselves capable of the same spiritual experience and of bearing in daily life the same fruits of the Spirit. Paul had often seen the old barriers collapse like the walls of Jericho, and had thus witnessed a living demonstration of the essential unity of mankind. All his teaching on the ethics of social relations can be regarded as based on that experience.

It must be admitted, however, that there were anticipations of this conception of the essential unity of mankind both in Judaism and Stoicism. Such a conception was clearly implied by the

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missionary propaganda of the Jews. Dibelius quotes from Friedmann's *Seder Eliahu Rabba* the following Jewish saying: 'I call heaven and earth to witness, that the heathen as well as the Israelite, both man and woman, both the manservant and the maidservant are able through moral behaviour to come into the possession of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> But in Judaism such an idea occurred but seldom, and even when it occurred it remained largely an academic issue with little or no practical effect on the course of the world's life, while, in the case of Paul, it exercised an extraordinary influence on the social ethics of the early Church.

Again, there are striking parallels between the teaching of Paul and that of the Stoics. The founder of Stoicism, Zeno, sketched his view of a perfect State in his 'Commonwealth' (*πολιτεία*). According to him the perfect State embraces the whole world, so that a man says not 'I am a citizen of Athens' but 'I am a citizen of the world'. In it there are no class distinctions, for all must be wise men; and there is no distinctive dress for the sexes, for the virtues and duties of both men and women are the same. Here clearly the essential unity of mankind is stressed. Seeing that Tarsus University was a centre of Stoic teaching, it is almost certain that Paul was more or less familiar with Stoic ideas. According to Acts xvii. 28, in his speech on Mar's Hill, he quoted from a Stoic poet, Cleanthes, the saying (found also in the Cilician poet Aratus): 'We too are His offspring', and the greater part of the speech would have been approved by the Stoics, especially the declaration that God has made of one nature all nations of men. That Stoicism exercised a considerable influence on human thought both immediately before and after the beginning of our era is clear from the evidence provided by such teachers as Panaetius, Posidonius of Rhodes, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. As Wendland says: 'The Stoic preaching of the dignity of man, conceived though it was in an exclusively intellectual way, contributed to

<sup>1</sup> *An die Kolosser*, p. 32.

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the levelling and adjusting of social principles and to the elevation of the condition of woman. The difference between master and slave disappears before the higher difference between the inner freedom which may be achieved in every station of life and the bondage to the passions from which neither free birth nor even the purple can preserve a man.<sup>1</sup> That Stoicism did something to modify the hard lot of the slave—though not much, if it be true, as has been affirmed, that the sufferings of negro slaves, terrible as they were, were but a drop in the bucket compared to those of Roman slaves—seems likely in view of such words as these: "They are slaves, you urge; nay, they are men. They are slaves; nay, they are comrades. They are slaves; nay, they are humble friends. They are slaves; nay, they are fellow-slaves, if you reflect that fortune has the same power over both. . . . Let some of them dine with you, because they are worthy; others, that they may become worthy. . . . He is a slave, you say. Yet perchance he is free in spirit. He is a slave. Will this harm him? Show me who is not. One is a slave to lust, another to avarice, a third to ambition, all alike to fear."<sup>2</sup>

Yet the difference between Paul and the Stoics is even more striking than the parallelism. When, for instance, Seneca says "The Holy Spirit can enter the Roman knight or the freedman or the slave. For what are the terms "Roman knight", "freedman", "slave"? Names born either of pomp or injustice",<sup>3</sup> the apparent likeness of his thought to that of Paul vanishes when it is recognised that all that Seneca means by 'Holy Spirit' is God pantheistically conceived and, therefore, equally in everybody and everything. When the Stoics spoke of God, they meant 'fate' or 'nature' or 'necessity' or 'the world as a whole'; the God of the Stoics was an impersonal life-force; 'as all beings have proceeded from God, so they will be absorbed in deity at the general conflagration, (ἐκπύ-

<sup>1</sup> *Die Hellenistische-Römische Kultur*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep. Mor.* xlvii, 15, 17, quoted in Lightfoot's Essay, 'St. Paul and Seneca.'

<sup>3</sup> *Ep. Mor.* xxi, 11.

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ρωσις) with which the history of the universe ends. Then God becomes all in all, and from him commences a new era of development.<sup>1</sup>

Paul's conception of the unity of mankind was so different from that of the Stoics that it cannot have been derived from them, even if he did gain some familiarity with Stoic ideas at Tarsus. Again and again, he appeals to Christ as the source and spring of all that he is as a Christian and all that he teaches as an Apostle. On the basis of his Christian experience he reached ideas similar to those of the Stoics, but he reached them independently, and even if he did build into his ethics some material borrowed from Stoicism, he so recast it and transformed it that it became inwardly one with what he had learned from Christ.

The results of Stoicism were meagre enough. It attracted a 'few isolated men: but on the life of the masses, and on the policy of States it was practically powerless. . . The true Stoic was too self-contained, too indifferent to the condition of others, to concern himself whether the tenets of his school made many proselytes or few. He wrapped himself up in his self-conceit, declared the world to be mad, and gave himself no more trouble about the matter. His avowal of cosmopolitan principles, his tenet of religious equality, became inoperative, because the springs of sympathy, which alone could make them operative, had been frozen at their source. Where enthusiasm is a weakness and love a delusion, such professions must be empty verbiage. The temper of Stoicism was essentially aristocratic and exclusive in religion, as it was in politics. While professing the largest comprehension, it was practically the narrowest of all philosophical castes.'<sup>2</sup>

In his Gospel, Paul had the religious dynamic which made his ideas about the unity of the human race effective. Christian love was so active in his heart that he was profoundly interested—as his letters prove—in the actual establishment of right relations

<sup>1</sup> E.R.E. Vol. XI, p. 862.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *op. cit.* pp. 309, 322.

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between men of different races and classes and between the two sexes. It was the spiritual experience of early Christians that revealed to him the true line of advance, in that it made clear to him that any human being, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, might become a temple where the Spirit of God dwelt. Thus Paul realised that the distinctions so sharply drawn by men of the world were, as a matter of fact, superficial and illusory. This discovery—the witness of the actual spiritual experience of all sorts and conditions of men—was the solid foundation on which he built the superstructure of his social ethics.

That the ideas which were so basic to Paul's social teaching are playing a big part in the thought of the world to-day is a matter of common knowledge, though they are often regarded as quite 'modern', and as the 'discoveries' of our own day. Modern science scouts the idea of 'superior' and 'inferior' races, (a notion which was so dear to the German Nazis). A good deal of evidence on this question has been collected by G. A. Dorsey, in an essay on 'Race and Civilization',<sup>1</sup> including this statement by Professor A. M. Tozzer: 'There is no present evidence, physical, psychological, or cultural, to prove that contemporaneous savages are fundamentally different in mind, body, or estate from the sophisticated human product of civilisation. The savage is "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." He is in short "a poor relation, but our own. . ."' The savage is a rational being, morally sound, and in every respect worthy of a place in the "Universal Brotherhood of Man".' That some races and nations are more advanced than others is plain fact, but the backward races are capable of advance. In the light of this truth, it is clear that all exploitation of backward races is a crime against the human family, comparable to the bullying of a small boy by a big brother, and it is no less clear that all attempts on the part of one nation to dominate mankind are a sin against the brotherhood. These ideas are playing an ever larger

<sup>1</sup> *Whither Mankind?*, edited by C. A. Beard, Chap. x.

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part in the shaping and fashioning and moralising of international intercourse, and colonial relations, and only as they become effective is there any hope of an ordered future for mankind. Just as the first great Christian missionary proclaimed the essential unity of mankind, so modern missionaries, notably David Livingstone, have blazed a new trail in the relations between the white man and coloured peoples. The only sound foundation for international ethics is to be found in that recognition of the essential unity of mankind which is characteristic of Paul's thought. Again, it is a mere truism to-day that the seeming 'superiority' of the upper classes of society is due to the superior cultural opportunities and privileges which they have enjoyed for many generations. There is no reason to suppose that, given the necessary educational and cultural opportunities, the lower classes will not produce as many men of ability as the upper classes. Dukes and earls have no essential powers different from those of the ordinary citizen. War conditions have made it clear that superb courage and brilliant powers of leadership are the prerogative of no particular class. Once more, the emancipation of women is one of the outstanding features of social life to-day. It is conceded now that girls are as much entitled as boys to higher education, and have the same right as boys to contend for mastery in games. Professions like law and medicine, which were so long regarded as the special preserves of men, have now admitted women to their ranks. All public bodies, from Parliament to Parish Councils, have opened their doors to women, so that on all the questions of the day the voice of woman is now heard. The badge of inferiority which woman has worn from time immemorial has been removed. But while our generation preens itself on the modernity of these ideas, let it never be forgotten that Paul of Tarsus was fully alive to the fact that the alleged superiority of one race to another or of one class to another or of man to woman was a complete delusion. He stood for the essential unity and solidarity

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of mankind, and was led to the recognition of that truth by the realisation that, as a matter of fact, spiritual experience was completely independent of all those distinctions of race and class and sex which are normally so sharply drawn.

### (c) JEW AND GENTILE

One of the most amazing features of the teaching of Paul is his recognition that Gentiles and Jews alike have access to God through Jesus Christ on exactly the same terms—full personal self-committal. On this issue the most important passage is Ephesians ii., 11-16 which can best be rendered thus, (the E. T. is very unsatisfactory, both A. V. and R. V.): 'Wherefore remember that at one time, you, regarded as "heathen" from the physical point of view, derisively called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision", (a purely physical sign made by hand), [remember, I say], that you were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of the promise (that is, of a Messiah), in a hopeless state, without the true knowledge of God in this world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you that once were afar have been made nigh in the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, inasmuch as He has made both of us one, and has broken down the dividing fence between us, namely, the hostility, (i. e., between Jew and Gentile), having brought to nought in his flesh the code of commandments expressed in decrees (i. e., the Law), that He might create the two of us in Himself into one new man, thus making peace between us, and might reconcile us both, now one body, to God through His cross, on which He slew the enmity that once divided us'. That a Jew should declare that God has swept away the Law which divided Jews and Gentiles and made it possible for Gentiles to approach Him on exactly the same terms as Jews; and that he should declare that God has in Christ destroyed the age-long



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enmity between Gentile and Jew and made both peoples one, is surely a remarkable thing. What Paul means is that in the Christian fellowship the age-long tragic feud between Jew and Gentile has vanished away. Such unity was never achieved in Jewish synagogues, certainly not in the case of those 'devout Greeks' who, without fully embracing the Jewish faith, were attracted to the worship of the Jewish synagogue because of its freedom from idolatry, its monotheism, and its high ethic; and not even in the case of Gentiles who became full proselytes, submitting to circumcision and taking upon themselves the whole yoke of the Law. For, as Harnack points out: 'A non-Jew cannot, at any rate in the first generation, become a true son of Abraham, his standing before God remains an inferior one, and, therefore, it also remains doubtful to what degree the proselyte—not to speak of the devout Greeks—will share in the promises of a glorious future.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the Gentile convert to Judaism was always made to feel that he was a mere guest rather than a full member of the family. But in the Church, Jew and Gentile were on an absolutely equal footing, the Jew abandoned all claims that his position was in some way superior to that of the Gentile, while the Gentile renounced his native scorn for the Jew, and the two became 'one new man'. It was to encourage harmonious and cordial relations between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Christian Church that Paul went to so much trouble to make a collection in the Gentile Churches of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia on behalf of poor Christian Jews in Jerusalem, and it was when he had gone to Jerusalem to present this offering in person that he was arrested, and eventually put to death. What a host of horrible incidents all through the centuries, and more than ever in our own times, would never have taken place, if the world in general had found a solution of the Jew-Gentile problem as happy as that found within the early Church!

<sup>1</sup> *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, Vol. I, pp. 17 f.

(d) MASTER AND SLAVE

Paul insisted that Christian slaves should not be disturbed or distressed by their servile condition. 'Were you a slave when you were converted? Don't worry about that', (1 Cor. vii. 21). The interpretation of the next part of the verse, (the E. T. is quite ambiguous), is much disputed, but though the weight of scholarly opinion is on the other side, the most natural rendering seems to be: 'Of course, if you have the opportunity of becoming free, by all means make use of it', (note especially the *aorist* imperative *χρησάου*). Nevertheless, Paul was more interested in the moral and spiritual advance of slaves than in their emancipation. As has been suggested, he was more concerned that they should move 'upwards' than that they should move 'forwards'. He pointed out that, as a Christian, the slave could be inwardly free, the Lord's freedman; while Christians who were born free were after all the Lord's slaves.

As for the relations between Christian slaves and their Christian masters, he urged slaves to perform their duties loyally and cheerfully, and masters to be just and fair and humane in their treatment of their slaves—ever mindful that they too had a Master in heaven. Both parties alike were warned that God was no respecter of persons—He had no favourites; He would not overlook wrongdoing in a slave just because he was a slave, or in a master just because he was a master (Col. iii. 22ff.).

But there is no suggestion in Paul's teaching that slaves ought to be emancipated. Even Philemon was not told that he ought to set Onesimus free—he was urged simply to treat him as a dearly loved brother, both as a man and as a Christian, (*καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ*, v. 16). Thus Paul neither concedes the rightness of slavery nor appears as its opponent. He had been familiar with slavery all his life. The fact that it was sanctioned in the Jewish Law, probably led Paul to regard slavery as an essential part of the

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scheme of things, and perhaps even as divinely ordained. It is well to remember, too, that in a non-democratic society like that in which Paul lived, the average citizen does not and cannot feel any personal responsibility for legal institutions however evil, and in any case realises that he is absolutely powerless to get things changed. Further, the time was not ripe for abolition, and any agitation for it would in all probability have led to a slave-war which would have resulted in frightful suffering and in the fixing of the fetters more firmly than ever on the wrists of the slaves who survived. Then, too, Paul expected the speedy return of Christ and the end of the present world, when all wrongs would be speedily put right.

Though Paul cannot be regarded as a first century Wilberforce, yet he did insist on the humane treatment of slaves as brother-men. Thus in the Christian Church, the slave was treated as the equal of his fellow Christians who were born free. When a slave was treated as a brother and sat by his master at the Lord's Table, the social difference between master and slave lost most of its harshness. In his tender care and solicitude for the runaway slave, Onesimus, and in his dealings with slaves in general, Paul gave expression to that spirit of humanity which slowly but surely undermined slavery and ultimately swept it away.

Thus it may be said that Paul played no small part in the task of humanising the relations between the various classes of Society. A remark of his, which refers primarily to the different types of workers in the Church, the Body of Christ, is no less applicable to the different members of the social organism: 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you', (1 Cor. xii. 21). The man who held that even the slave was entitled to the respect and esteem and love of his fellows, would certainly condemn all scorn for people in lowly station, all neglect of their rights, interests, and feelings. It is generally acknowledged to-day that no man, however menial his

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work, should be regarded as a mere thing, a mere means to somebody else's end, and that every man as a *person* is an end in himself. We shall never get rid of the classes, and to aspire after the classless society of the Communists is to cry for the moon. But social solidarity could be achieved, on the basis of the recognition that every human being doing honest work that is essential to the well-being of Society is a person who should enjoy the regard, consideration and respect of his fellows. Class bitterness would vanish away if there were more comradeship and fellow-feeling between the classes, and all workers, whether in black-coats or in overalls, were regarded as fellow-members of the social organism, each in his own way contributing to the good of the organism as a whole. Nobody would deny that the miner is as indispensable to society as the doctor, and the chimney-sweep as the lawyer, and the domestic servant as the school-mistress, but unfortunately in actual practice the 'head' is perversely apt to behave as though it could dispense with the 'hands' and the 'feet'. If men caught the spirit of Paul's letter to Philemon, in which he shows his profound concern even for a quondam thieving runaway slave, a creature of no account in the eyes of the contemporary world, they would display a new humaneness in all their dealings with their fellows, and the cruelty of snobbishness would vanish away.

### (e) MAN AND WOMAN

In order rightly to assess Paul's view of the position of woman, it is necessary to point out that there are in the New Testament two remarks about women, which, though they are attributed to him, never came from his pen.

The first passage runs thus: 'Let the women keep silence in the Churches for it is not permitted to them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn something, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a

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disgraceful thing for a woman to speak in Church', (1 Cor. xiv. 34f.).

There is a certain amount of external evidence against these verses, for in the Western MSS (D,F,G) they follow verse 40, and appear to be a later addition to the text. The internal evidence, however, is decisively against the genuineness of the passage. For one thing, it interrupts the sense, for verse 36 is the natural sequel to verse 33. Further, seeing that Paul claimed freedom from the Law, it is hardly likely that he would appeal to the authority of the Law in such a matter as this. More important still, the passage flatly contradicts xi., 5 and 13, where Paul expressly acknowledges the right of women to take part in public worship, both by prayer and preaching, though he insists that a woman who does so should respect the conventions of Society by appearing veiled. In view of Paul's many references to prominent women in the Churches, it is clear that women often spoke in Church and that the Apostle approved of the practice. It is, therefore, inconceivable that he ever declared that it was not only not permissible, but actually disgraceful, for women to speak in Church. When he commended Phoebe of Cenchrea to the Church at Rome, (Rom. xvi. 1-2), he surely implied that the Church should give a patient and sympathetic hearing to what she had to say. He clearly valued the services of Priscilla as much as those of her husband, Aquila, and probably more so, for in Romans xvi. 3 he mentions her name first. He certainly never forbade Priscilla to speak in Church! Again, we read 'Salute Mary, who bestowed much labour on you' (Rom. xvi. 6), and the labour referred to can hardly have been confined to the giving of hospitality, but almost certainly included teaching and preaching. The references to Tryphaena and Tryphosa and Persis (Rom. xvi. 12f.) all imply public activity. Euodia and Syntyche seem to have been very active women in the Church at Philippi, (Phil. iv. 2), though alas! rather quarrelsome. In the light of all this evidence we may definitely conclude

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that Paul never forbade women to speak in Church, and the origin of the passage under consideration is to be found in the reactionary desire of a later age to check the activity of women in public life, and those who wrote it inserted it in one of Paul's letters in order to invest their reactionary sentiments with Pauline authority.

The other passage runs thus: 'Let a woman learn in quietness, in all subjection. I do not permit a woman to teach, or to exercise authority over a man, but to be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but his wife was deceived and fell into transgression', (1 Tim. ii. 11ff.). This passage probably supplied the warrant to those who were responsible for the addition of the previous passage to 1 Corinthians but it belongs to the Pastoral Epistles, and their Pauline authorship cannot be seriously affirmed.

Thus the two passages responsible for the idea, entertained by many people to-day, that Paul was something of a misogynist, were not written by him at all, and it is no small contribution to clear thinking about Paul's social teaching to prove him 'not guilty' of having written these depreciatory references to women.

Paul's greatest word about the position of woman in reference to man is that considered at the beginning of this chapter: 'there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus', (Gal. iii. 28). On the basis of the fact that woman had proved herself as capable of Christian experience as man, and as likely a recipient of the Holy Spirit as man, Paul here categorically declares the complete equality of the sexes.

It must be conceded, however, that Paul was not always true to the new insight he had gained. It was no departure from this principle when he insisted that no woman should take part in public worship unless she wore headdress. He naturally and rightly felt that some heed should be paid in Church to current social conventions. It would appear that there were women in the Corin-

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thian Church who, in their enthusiasm for the idea that in Christ was neither male nor female, were setting at defiance the generally observed rules in regard to feminine propriety and modesty, by appearing in Church bareheaded like men. Paul's ruling was wise. If women appeared in Church bareheaded, they approached, in matters of dress, the behaviour of women of the street whose hair was cut short to give them a masculine appearance. No modest Greek woman ever appeared in public unveiled, and Paul recognised that if Christian women ignored the rules of etiquette in this matter, they would be regarded by outsiders as not far removed from women of loose morals, and would thus bring discredit on the Church. Even to-day, most women would regard it as immodest and unseemly to appear at worship without headdress. 'If any one presumes to raise objections on this point—well, I for one acknowledge no other mode of worship, and neither do the churches of God', (1 Cor. xi. 6).

But while Paul's ruling on this matter was wise, the argumentation by which he supported it hardly coincides with his view of the equality of the sexes. He holds fast to the old-world view of the superiority of man to woman. He maintains that God is the head of Christ, Christ the head of man, man the head of woman. The wearing of a veil is a sign of submission, appropriate for woman, inappropriate for man. Man was made directly in the image of God, but woman indirectly out of a rib of man. (1 Cor. xi. 3,4,9). Similarly he writes to the Ephesians, 'the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is head of the Church . . . but as the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject to their husbands in everything', (v. 23f.). There is clearly no sex-equality here! 'The existing patriarchalism, with the predominance of the husband is accepted as the natural order, and submission to it is demanded as an ethical duty.'<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of this lapse from his new insight is to be found

<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 81.

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in two directions. For one thing, extreme ideas about feminine modesty prevailed amongst the Jews. For a woman to allow herself to be seen in public bareheaded was regarded as a disgraceful exposure. To listen to the song of women was felt to verge on unchastity. A young man in Judea was allowed to spend only an hour or two alone with his fiancée before marriage, and it was considered dubious whether such a concession should be allowed to the young men of Galilee. Any intercourse with women outside the home circle was very restricted and was regarded with great suspicion.<sup>1</sup> 'And the disciples were surprised that he (Jesus) was talking with a woman', (John iv. 27). Paul had not completely emancipated himself from these ingrained Jewish ideas about women. Then, far more important still, Paul's reverence for the Old Testament as the word of God led him to regard as still valid all the Old Testament teaching about the position of woman, especially Genesis ii. 18-22 which he interpreted literally. Either he did not recognise that the Old Testament teaching was inconsistent with his new Christian insight or he did not know how to reconcile the two.

The solid fact, however, remains that he did insist on the complete spiritual equality of man and woman, and recognised that since a woman could receive the Spirit as truly as a man, she had as much right as a man to exercise her spiritual gifts by teaching and preaching in Church.

### (f) MARRIAGE

Paul deals very frankly with the question of marriage, and in this connection displays the 'directness' which Sir Richard Livingstone regards as one of the marks of the Greeks. 'There are two literatures in the world which are hopelessly at war with this spirit (humbug and false sentiment), and which we must shun

<sup>1</sup> See Franz Delitzsch, *Jewish Artisan Life*, pp. 53 f.



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unless we wish to be shaken out of it. They are very different in their conclusions, for they start from widely different presuppositions, but they are much alike in their determination to see things as they are. One of these is Greek literature, the other is the New Testament. They may seem a queer pair to couple. Yet anyone can take my meaning who will note St. Paul's teaching on marriage.<sup>1</sup>

That Paul insisted on continence before marriage and fidelity in marriage has already been made clear. He deals with the whole question in reply to a query addressed to him by the Church at Corinth. Evidently there were some members of the Church who were ascetically inclined, and who were haunted by the suspicion that there was something unclean in sexual life. Such an idea was partly a reaction from the excessive licentiousness of the surrounding world. Those who entertained it were convinced that they were standing for ideal Christian morality. They appear to have asked the Apostle whether marriage, in the physical sense, was compatible with Christianity.

Paul's answer reveals a certain sympathy with the view of these ascetics, while at the same time it shows that he was realist enough to recognise that normal people could hardly be expected to renounce sexual intercourse altogether, so that if the sexual urge was not satisfied within marriage, it would lead either to inward tumult or to irregular sexual indulgence in the form of fornication or adultery.

He laid it down quite definitely that the *ideal* thing in his opinion was to refrain from sexual indulgence altogether: 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman', (vii. 1). But he was aware that the spiritual gift (*χάρισμα*) which enables a man or a woman to live in such complete continence was not given to everybody. He saw that a young man with strong natural passions would have a fearful struggle with himself if he aimed at complete abstinence

<sup>1</sup> op. cit. pp. 107 f.

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from sexual indulgence as part and parcel of the Christian moral ideal. For such a man, he held, the only safe course was marriage. 'It is better to get married once for all (*γαμήσαι*) than to burn continually (*πυροῦσθαι*) [with unsatisfied sexual desire]' (vii. 9). Otherwise, such a man, through inability to exercise complete self-control—of itself a proof that the *χάρισμα* of celibacy had not been given to him—would easily be driven into vice. In consequence of this remark, Paul has often been accused of taking a low view of marriage as an institution which existed merely for the regularisation of sexual intercourse. But such an accusation is hardly fair to the Apostle because, as a matter of fact, he took a high view of marriage, and compared the union of man and woman in marriage to the union of Christ and the Church. The plain truth is that Paul is simply facing the fact that the average man is unfitted for a celibate life and he maintains that if celibacy leads to constant unrest or sexual irregularities, marriage is the preferable course. Here Paul has the witness of human experience through the ages on his side. There have been many men who, as monks or priests, have adopted a celibate life, but who were unfitted for it—hence the unsavoury reputation of some of the monasteries and the occasional scandals which sully the reputation of the priesthood. Many of the sexual irregularities of to-day are due, to no small extent, to the fact that early marriage is often, for financial or other reasons, impossible or impracticable. Only those who are capable of the complete sublimation of sexual energy in devotion to some high cause—as, for instance, Paul himself was—are fitted for a celibate life.

But while Paul regards complete abstinence from sexual intercourse as the ideal thing, he warns the married 'ascetics' against physical refusal, (1 Cor. vii. 3-5). He was afraid that the attempt on the part of married people to enforce absolute continence on themselves would lead to illicit relations through a lack of self-control on the part of husband or wife or both; as he said: 'Satan

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might tempt them'. A very similar issue is raised in connection with the custom of 'spiritual marriage' known to the early Church, by which a devout young couple lived together as husband and wife but without sexual intercourse.<sup>1</sup> Such couples were called *συνεῖσακτοι*, and they sought to display their power to overcome the lusts of the flesh. Paul wisely urged them to marry if they found such moral heroics beyond their power of self-control. It is obvious that in such cases difficulties would arise and one or both parties would sometimes desire the physical union of marriage. The E. T. has so missed the point at issue that another translation is necessary: 'If anyone (that is, any young man spiritually married) considers that he is behaving improperly to his spiritual bride, if he be passionate and so it must be, let him do what he wishes; he commits no sin; let them marry. But he who is steadfast of purpose, under no compulsion, and has control of his own will, and has come to this decision in his own mind, namely, to keep his spiritual bride a virgin, he will do right. So that the man who marries his spiritual bride does well; but he who does not marry her will do better.'<sup>2</sup> Here again, for Paul, the issue hinges on the question as to whether the parties concerned possess the *χάρισμα* of complete continence. Celibacy and virginity he regards as the ideal course. Marriage is a second best, but not in any way sinful, and infinitely to be preferred to illicit sexual relations.

On the question of divorce, Paul appealed to the teaching of Jesus and forbade it. It may be that some of the ascetically inclined married Christians at Corinth felt that they ought to renounce their marriage altogether—and that tendency Paul scotched. If separation did take place, the parties must either remain single or become reconciled, (vii. 10-11). Even when one partner to a

<sup>1</sup> See *Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude IX, Ch. xi. cf. *Irenaeus*, I, 6, 3.

<sup>2</sup> On the difficulties presented by the words *ὑπέρρακμος* and *γαμίζων*, see Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, pp. 34 ff.

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marriage became a Christian while the other remained a pagan, there was to be no separation unless the unbelieving partner insisted on it, and in that case separation was necessary for no Christian was called upon to live in a perpetual state of domestic discord. The Christian partner must not refuse to separate in such circumstances, in the hope of bringing about the conversion of the pagan spouse, (vii. 12-16).

The Apostle found nothing wrong in contracting a second marriage. He advised widows to remain unmarried, but conceded that they were perfectly free to marry again if they wished—though he held that the new husband should be a Christian, (vii. 39).

As has already been shown [ch. vii. b(2)], Paul's teaching on marriage was strongly influenced by his view that the end of the world, a time of great tribulation, was at hand, so that he commended celibacy on prudential grounds—people without little children to care for at such a critical period would be fortunate indeed. Then, too, in view of the imminence of the end, he felt that the predominant consideration for every Christian man and woman was the service of Christ, and he was convinced that for that purpose the unmarried were freer than the married—a religious motive for celibacy. His categorical assertions that there is no sin in marriage prove that his views on the subject were not ascetic in character, and in no way akin to the idea of many Gnostics and of all Encratites that marriage is an evil thing which the Christian should utterly renounce. True he chose celibacy for himself and advised it for others, though he had no wish to restrict people's freedom, to 'throw a halter on them', (vii. 35). That he did not take a low view of marriage is clear from this exhortation alone: 'Husbands love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it', (Eph. v. 25)—married life and love could hardly be placed on a higher footing than that.

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### (g) THE FAMILY

Quite incidentally Paul makes an interesting and important remark about the relations between parents and children. After pointing out the complete disinterestedness of his service of the Christians at Corinth, ('for I am seeking not your money but you'), he adds that it is not for children to save up (*θησαυρίζειν*) for their parents, but for parents to save up for their children, (2 Cor. xii. 14). He apparently had no sympathy with the not uncommon view that children have an economic value for their parents. The ancient Greeks were quite frank about the economic value of children. 'If God gives us children, we shall consult together about the best way of bringing them up; we shall need them to help us and support us in our old age. . . For, in the first place, that the various species of living creatures may not fail, they are joined in wedlock for the production of children. Secondly, offspring to support them in old age is provided by this union, to human beings, at any rate.'<sup>1</sup> Aristotle is no less frank, for while he admits that a father might cast off his son, he insists that he would hardly be likely to do so unless the son were utterly depraved, for he would thereby rob himself of his son's assistance in his old age.<sup>2</sup> Similarly Medea, when she is about to slay her children, complains, 'at one time I, unhappy that I am, had many hopes that you would feed my old age, (*γηροβοσκήσειν*).'<sup>3</sup> That it is the Christian and the natural duty of children to support indigent parents, is of course, obvious, but the idea that children should be regarded as economic assets is definitely wrong. In industrial circles children are sometimes valued for their possibilities as contributors to the family exchequer; in agricultural circles they are often similarly valued as future workers on the farm; while the business man sometimes sees in a son mainly one who

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *Oec.* vii, 11, 19.

<sup>2</sup> See *Nic. Eth.* VIII, xiv, 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1, 1033.

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will carry on his business for him when his own powers are no longer equal to the task. In such ways as these, many a life has been spoiled, either because a youth's education has been cut short in order that he may begin to earn, or because he has been put to work that is utterly uncongenial, and in which his native talents can find no play. Paul's idea that parents should consider solely the welfare of their children and not just make economic assets of them is as sound in practice as it is ethically right.

On the respective duties of children to parents and parents to children, Paul is quite explicit, (Col. iii. 20-21, and Eph. vi. 1-4). Children are urged to be obedient to their parents in 'the Lord', that is, as a Christian as well as a natural duty. In support of this plea, he quotes the Fifth Commandment, and adds a parenthesis which is usually rendered 'which is the first commandment with promise' but which probably should be rendered, 'which is one of the primary (or chief) commandments, accompanied with a promise'. One count in his indictment of the Gentile world is the complaint that so many people were unfilial and bereft of natural affection, (Rom. i. 30). Fathers are warned not to irritate their children by being too strict, lest they should lose heart. They are urged to bring up their children in the training (*παιδεία*) and admonition (*νουθεσία*) of the Lord, that is, in such training and admonition as Christ Himself would give. Paul is here following a great Jewish tradition: 'And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest in the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up', (Deut. vi. 6-7). The Apostle thus clearly recognises that the home is the chief centre of religious training, and it is hardly too much to say that the decay of home-religion is one of the chief causes of religious decline and of the prevailing spiritual indifference in the modern world.

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### (h) DAILY WORK

So far as the economic aspect of his life was concerned, Psalm cxxviii. 2, might well have served as Paul's motto: 'For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee'. He was no parasite. He never held out his hand for alms. He voluntarily renounced his undoubted right to live at the expense of those whom he served in spiritual things. 'For you remember, brothers, my labour and travail, working night and day, that I might not be a burden to any of you', (1 Thess. ii. 9). 'For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate me, for I did not fail in the performance of my duty (lit. I did not quit the ranks, οὐκ ἡτακτήσαμεν) when I was among you; nor did I eat bread free gratis from anybody', (2 Thess. iii. 7f.). 'I toil, labouring with my hands', (1 Cor. iv. 12). 'Lo, this third time I am ready to come to you, and I shall not be a dead weight (καταναρκήσω) on you', (2 Cor. xii. 14). His motive in thus working for his own living was, in part, the proud desire to preach the gospel without being paid for it, because he felt that in that way his witness would be most effective. But in part, his motive was the desire to preserve his own independence and self-respect and by his example to give his converts a lesson in diligence and self-reliance.

The example he thus gave was fortified by precept. He urged his converts to earn their own living by honest work. They were to work not only in the interests of their own self-respect, but also that they might be in a position to assist others who were in need—they were to aim at being givers not receivers, lifters not leaners, and not to get their living at other people's expense. 'Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him labour, earning an honest wage (ἐργαζόμενος τὸ ἀγαθόν), that he may have something to share with the needy', (Eph. iv. 28). 'And I exhort you, brothers, to excel (in brotherly love) more and more, and to be ambitious to live quietly, and to attend to your own business, and to work

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with your hands, as I commanded you, that you may conduct yourselves without reproach in the eyes of outsiders, and may have need of nothing', (1 Thess. iv. 11). He dealt quite sternly with the fanatics at Thessalonica who were so sure that the Parousia was at hand that they had given up working, and consequently had to live on other people. 'For when I was with you, I used to give you this charge, If any man refuses to work, let him also not eat. For I hear that some among you are conducting themselves in a disorderly manner, not working at all but wasting their time. I charge and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to earn their own living', (2 Thess. iii. 10ff.). It is noteworthy that even in the early Church, where there was so much religious excitement and enthusiasm, (sometimes bordering on fanaticism), such stress is laid upon so prosaic a thing as the duty of work. Nobody can justly bring against Christianity, (which has naturally laid great stress on the duty of charity to those in distress) the reproach that it has made light of the duty of work. There is a good deal of evidence that during the first two centuries the Pauline tradition in this matter was faithfully preserved; it was recognised that the duty of supporting the poor was limited by their capacity to work, and it was assumed that those who were unwilling to work were not entitled to eat. On this point careful instructions were given in the Didache: 'If he that cometh is a passer by, succour him as far as you can: but he shall not abide with you more than two or three days, unless there be necessity. But if he be minded to settle among you, and be a craftsman, let him work and eat. But, if he have no trade, according to your understanding provide that he shall not live idly among you, being a Christian. But if he will not do this, he is a trafficker on Christ: of such men beware.'<sup>1</sup> There were doubtless many Christians who in the kindness and charity of their hearts were easily deceived by cunning swindlers, men who hypocritically professed

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xii.



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to be travellers in the Christian cause that they might enjoy the hospitality of Christian people, but it appears to have been generally recognised that the man who was capable of working ought to earn his daily bread, and so a man of that type was provided with work instead of alms. It was no small thing that an unemployed Christian could turn to the Church as a refuge where he would meet people who would try to find work for him, just as it was no trivial thing that a Christian man incapable of work could be sure of friendly help from his fellow Christians. 'From the economic point of view we must esteem highly a community which guaranteed work to those able to work and protected from hunger those who were incapacitated for work.'<sup>1</sup> According to Paul, at any rate, no man was worthy of the Christian name unless he was eager both to support himself and to help others by honest work, if he was able to work at all; and the social implications of that principle for the modern world are obvious. It will be a sorry business if the 'social services' (one of the finest features of modern social life) are carried so far as to undermine self-reliance, self-respect, and that pride in independence which is characteristic of any man of spirit—as Galsworthy showed in his play 'Old England'. *Social parasitism* is as bad as any other type of that contemptible thing.

### (i) THE STATE

However proud Paul may have been of his Roman citizenship—and that he possessed it is clear from the fact that he exercised the citizen's *ius provocationis* by appealing to Caesar—he recognised that the Christian's true citizenship was in heaven, 'for *our* citizenship is in heaven', (Phil. iii. 20). It is significant that these words occur in the letter to the Philippians who lived in a Roman colony, and so Moffat's rendering is excellent: 'But we are a

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Die Mission etc.*, p. 200.

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colony of heaven', though the 'we' is so emphatic it should have been printed in italics. Just as Roman colonists sought to fashion the life of the new community after the model of Rome, so Christians were to seek to fashion the life of the Christian community according to the laws of heaven, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.

Paul was of the opinion that Christians should make no use at all of heathen law-courts, and was indignant with certain Christians at Corinth who, instead of submitting the questions at issue to the judgement of the 'saints', went to law before heathen judges, (1 Cor. vi.). He contended that it was a serious lapse from the Christian standard for Christian people to have lawsuits at all, and claimed (recalling that word of the Master in Matthew, v. 40?) that they ought to choose to suffer wrong rather than resort to litigation. Even if they could not rise to that height, he felt that surely there was some wise person in the Church capable of adjudicating in a dispute between Christian brother and Christian brother.

It is in Romans xiii., however, that he deals with what he conceived to be the right attitude to the State. He claims that the powers that be are ordained of God, so that to resist the magistracy is to resist God. He freely concedes to the State the power of life and death over its citizens, and maintains that when it exercises this function it is acting as God's servant, and is the agent of God's wrath against the evil-doer. On these grounds he insists that everybody should be submissive to the Governmental authority and should pay all that is due to the civil powers in the way of taxes, respect, and honour—an echo, perhaps, of the word of Jesus: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's'. That the Apostle should speak in this extremely deferential fashion of the Governmental power of his day is certainly noteworthy, in view of the fact that it was exercised by 'heathen' and had such a monster as Nero at its apex. He is far more deferential to the Roman

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Government than the average Christian nowadays is, or would think it right to be, to any modern democratic Government. Why then, does Paul speak as he does about the existing authorities?

To some extent he simply reflects an idea common amongst the Jews, namely, that legitimate rulers derive their authority from God. 'Hear, therefore, O ye kings, and understand; learn, ye that be judges of the ends of the earth. Give ear, ye that rule the people and glory in the multitude of nations. For power is given you of the Lord, and sovereignty from the Highest, who shall try your works and search out your counsels.'<sup>1</sup> Josephus refers to the fact that the Essenes required of an initiate an oath that 'he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God's assistance (δίκη θεοῦ).'<sup>2</sup> The official attitude of Judaism pointed in the same direction, for twice a day in the Temple there were sacrifices for the Roman Emperor and the Roman people, while in all the synagogues prayers for the Emperor were offered.<sup>3</sup> The question as to whether the Romans actually were the 'legitimate rulers' is here just ignored. The *de facto* rulers are simply regarded as *de jure* rulers too—a point of view easily taken by people who believe, as most Jews did, that all historical events are either ordained or allowed by God. Paul apparently believed that the triumph of Rome was an historical event ordained of God—a view impossible to the modern man who regards successful imperialistic aggression as on a par with successful bank-robbery. In any case, Roman dominion was an indubitable fact which it was prudent to recognise and futile to resist. Even Jesus, Who regarded the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them as in Satan's gift, (thus implying that Satanic force was behind the Roman Empire), recognised that the civil power responsible for public law and order must be given its due.

<sup>1</sup> Wis. Sol. vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Wars of the Jews II., viii, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, p. 431. Schürer, G.J.V. Vol. I, p. 483.

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Further, Paul was no Roman-hating Jewish fanatic, but a Hellenist and a Roman citizen, who shared in the gratitude of the Provinces which saw in the Roman Empire the preserver of peace, the principle of order as opposed to chaos, and the guarantee of the administration of justice. He appears to have regarded Rome as a power that restrained antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 5 and 8, τὸ κατέχον referring to Roman power and ὁ κατέχων to the Roman Emperor). Then, too, it was quite natural for Paul to take up a friendly attitude to the authority of Rome, for it was the *pax Romana* that made his missionary work possible, and, as is shown in the Acts of the Apostles, again and again he was rescued from the fury of Jewish mobs by the timely intervention of Roman officials.

What, then, was Paul's motive in urging dutiful submission to the Roman State? It was not simply gratitude for the Roman protection which he had enjoyed. Nor was it merely a display of political realism which recognised the hopelessness of any Jewish revolutionary movement. Nor was it mere tact, as Weinel suggests when he sees in Paul's teaching about the State nothing more than the tactful plea, 'Only, no revolution!'<sup>1</sup> (That there was a good deal of revolutionary feeling amongst Christians a few years later is proved by the Song of Jubilation of angels and men over the fall of Rome in the Book of Revelation, xviii. and xix.). Paul's motive seems to have been a profound respect for the State as such. Whatever the constitution of the State, he regarded it as the indispensable pre-condition of a worth-while existence in society; for where there is no strong government the miseries and horrors of anarchy soon appear. He regarded the Government as the powerful ally of all law-abiding citizens and the inexorable foe of all who were inclined to anti-social conduct. The Government, as the champion of public order and public right, seemed to him to be entitled to the loyal support of all reasonable men.

<sup>1</sup> *Die unchristliche und die heutige Mission*, p. 11.

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Anarchy was a thing so terrible that he felt that it must be avoided at all costs. He would have agreed with the Rabbi who said: 'Pray for the prosperity of the government, for if the fear of it were not present, people would swallow one another alive'—a view very similar to that of Hobbes in his 'Leviathan'. Such, then, is the kernel of Paul's thought about the State—he was convinced that there must be a lawful government to govern, to protect all law-abiding citizens and to restrain those who would otherwise prey upon their fellows. He felt, too, that in so far as the State fulfilled that function it was doing the will of God—and to that extent we can all surely say that the powers that be are ordained of God. As Troeltsch says: 'Paul did not merely recognise the State as permitted by God but prized it as an institution which at least cared for justice, order, and morality.'<sup>1</sup>

What he felt about the State's power of life and death on that day when he was led to execution, we cannot say. What he would have said about the State had he been writing after the Neronian persecution, again we cannot say. It is significant, however, that even after the persecutions of Nero and Domitian, Christians could still pray for the Emperor: 'To our princes and rulers on earth, Thou, O Lord, by thy majestic and ineffable might didst give royal power, that we, knowing the glory and honour which Thou hast given to them, may submit ourselves to them, in no way resisting Thy will. Give to them, O Lord, health, peace, harmony, prosperity, that they may exercise the authority bestowed upon them without stumbling. For Thou, heavenly Lord, King of the worlds, givest to the sons of men glory and honour and authority over everything on earth. Direct their counsel according to what is right and pleasing in Thy sight, that they, exercising the power Thou hast given to them, devoutly, in peace and gentleness, may share in Thy favour.'<sup>2</sup> In such a prayer

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.* I, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *I Clement*, Ch. lxi.

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there is the same recognition as in the teaching of Paul that orderly government is divinely ordained for the good of mankind.

It is an utter misuse of Paul's teaching to make it the basis of the theory of the divine right of kings, or to see in it any justification of State-tyranny over the conscience of the individual, or to use it to bolster up the authority of a government that is sheer usurpation and oppression. Paul's thought is concentrated on one issue only—the need of a strong government that protects the good citizen and proceeds against the malefactor, that strenuously upholds public law and order and right. That is a necessity which only an idle sentimentalism out of touch with the hard realities of this world can ignore, and to suppose, as many sentimental idealists do, that all people are by nature law-abiding citizens and that coercive authority is superfluous, is to cultivate the guilelessness of the dove in isolation from the shrewdness of the serpent. Paul rightly contends that orderly government is part of the will of God for man, for God 'is a God not of confusion but of peace' (I Cor. xiv. 33).

### NOTE TO CHAPTER X

The Gospels and the ten genuine Pauline letters form the heart of the New Testament, and consequently this discussion of New Testament ethics has been based almost solely on them. While in the rest of the New Testament there is a great deal of ethical teaching, yet no *new* ethical note is struck. The delineation of Christian character in the Pastoral Epistles (I and 2 Timothy and Titus) is based on the Pauline ethical tradition. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the ethical appeal is essentially for that Christian loyalty and staying-power (*ὑπομονή*) so much stressed in the teaching of both Christ and the Apostle. The Epistle of James is largely an ethical tract, but the substance of all its ethical teaching can be found in the Gospels or in Paul, so that to expound it

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would be simply to repeat what has already been said. The First Epistle of Peter, the most beautiful letter in the New Testament, can fairly be regarded as a commentary on the beatitude: 'Blessed are you when men reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake'. The ethical content of Jude and 2 Peter and (to some extent) of the Book of Revelation is concerned with the tendency of certain antinomian Christians to regard the sins of the flesh as matters of spiritual indifference. In the letters of John the great ethical note is the insistence on the inseparability of the love of God and the love of man—a point already noticed both in the Gospels and in Paul.

CHAPTER XI  
THE ETHICAL APPROACH  
TO CHRISTOLOGY

Whether the question is considered from the Christian point of view or not, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth raises a challenging problem for every thoughtful mind—a problem, too, that defies any slick solution. How is it that the highest well-being of the individual man, the evolution of a truly just society, and international harmony, concord, and goodwill can be fully achieved only as the lead of Jesus of Nazareth is followed? How are we to think of so unique a Person?

The historical facts are beyond dispute. He appeared on this earth of ours nearly 2,000 years ago. Anything in the way of earthly privilege or advantage was denied to Him. He was born in a stable, brought up by a peasant couple in a cottage, worked as a youth and young man at a carpenter's bench. He had no contact with any of the world's great cosmopolitan centres, or with any famous university, or with any renowned teacher, or with the chief representatives of any of the leading races of mankind. On the contrary, He lived His brief earthly life in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, amongst a subject people, in a small country commonly regarded as of no consequence. The only school He ever attended was the synagogue school at Nazareth. The only text-book He ever studied was the Old Testament. He was without wealth or social status. Yet, in spite of all these disadvantages and limitations, by virtue of the Spirit that was in Him, He uttered a wisdom which transcends in worth that of any world-renowned philoso-



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pher, and indeed of all philosophers combined. His message has proved itself fitted to the deepest needs of man as man, irrespective of all considerations of time or place or nationality. His witness was so sublime that it has been *the* light of the world ever since. In view of the impact of His life upon the life of the world and of the profound and far-reaching and lasting effects which He has produced, there are few who would deny for a moment that He is the greatest Being who has ever trod our earth. There is not much moral good in modern civilisation which has not come directly or indirectly from Him. Even the enemies of Christianity owe most of the best that is in them to Him. He is not a meteor, but a point of ever-growing light. To-day He is 'more potent in the life of mankind than ever before.'<sup>1</sup> The great characteristic of Christianity is 'that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe, and that it has discharged this office not so much by the inculcation of a system of ethics, however pure, as by the assimilating and attractive influence of a perfect ideal. The moral progress of mankind can never cease to be distinctively and intensely Christian so long as it consists of a gradual approximation to the character of the Christian Founder. There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race, than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring a new strength and beauty with each advance of civilisation, and infusing its beneficent influence into every sphere of thought and action.'<sup>2</sup> Such facts surely compel us to ponder the mystery of the Person of Jesus.

Again, it is the witness of ethical experience at its highest that there is a transcendent constraint laid upon us to seek and cherish the right and the good. Now it is impossible to think deeply on the life and witness of Jesus of Nazareth without realising that His word to us corresponds exactly to that transcendent constraint,

<sup>1</sup> K. S. Latourette, *op. cit.* p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky, *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, i, p. 307.

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that He reveals in His own person what the right and the good really are, that in Him the highest moral law becomes articulate, that He is goodness incarnate, that in Him we 'touch the supreme moral reality of the universe', that He is 'the last and highest fact of which moral reason takes cognisance'. As Matthew Arnold wrote: 'That there is an enduring Power, not ourselves, making for righteousness, is verifiable, as we have seen, by experience; and that Jesus is the offspring of this Power is verifiable from experience also. For God is the author of righteousness; now Jesus is the Son of God because he gives the method and secret by which alone is righteousness possible. And that he *does* give this, we can verify, again, from experience. It is so! try, and you will find it to be so! Try all the ways of righteousness you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it except the way of Jesus, but that this way does bring you to it.'<sup>1</sup> It is a fact of experience that to follow Christ is to find God. So experience, like history, compels us to ponder the mystery of the Person of Jesus.

The New Testament writers had no 'Christology' in the technical sense of that term. They were conscious of what Jesus had done for them, of the new life into which He had led them, and of the fellowship with God that they enjoyed through Him; they were sure that the Giver of this new life and this new revelation of God must have stood in some unique relation to God; and they were satisfied with any categories which enabled them to attribute supreme dignity to Jesus. When they used such terms as 'Messiah', 'Son of God', 'Great High Priest', 'Logos', they were simply trying to give expression to the conviction born in their souls that Jesus had come from God. All real Christology to-day is rooted and grounded in a similar experience.

Jesus is not adequately described simply as 'the Good Man of Galilee', as though He were merely a person who by one of the accidents or freaks of history just happened to appear on our

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, p. 313.

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earthly scene, or as though He were just a product of the world's immanent possibilities. 'We can think of ourselves without God, but we cannot think of Him without God. . . The one personal God thinks and speaks and acts in and through Christ.'<sup>1</sup> In Him, God's voice comes clearest through. He casts a new and super-human light on the divine purpose of the world and on the meaning of human life. He is One who 'on account of his great love became what we are that He might make us what He is Himself.'<sup>2</sup> So only can it be explained why Jesus of Nazareth meets the ethical needs of the human individual, of human society, and of mankind as a whole, and is, in short, in the ethical sense (apart from all other senses), the Saviour of the world. What the world needs is not simply the gospel of the evangelicals or the mere social gospel proclaimed by some modern teachers. It needs both *and a great deal more*, for neither of them separately nor both of them together represent the whole Christ. What is needed is more of Christ Himself, His convictions, His ideals, His character, His atmosphere. 'Christ is the world's greatest possession, and the world should know more of it and get more of its value out of it. Christ is not a mere example to whom we can refer the question: 'What would Jesus do?' He is a spiritual power in which we can dip and find strength, with whom we can commune, on whom we can draw. There is no distinction between the historical Jesus and the living Christ. The latter is simply the former realized, entered into, enjoyed, used.'<sup>3</sup>

So we cannot do better than conclude with some of the great notes struck by the New Testament. 'That which came into being in Him was Life, and the Life was the light of men'. 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us'. 'God, having in ancient times spoken to our fathers through the prophets in many fragmentary

<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott*, pp. 98 and 133.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V, pref.

<sup>3</sup> McGiffert, *Christianity as History and Faith*, p. 143.

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and varied ways, in these last days spoke to us in a Son'. It is only by such language that it is possible adequately to account for the profound ethical significance to mankind of Jesus of Nazareth,

*Who in a human life, a human heart,  
Did show the world, and showeth still the world,  
The very heart and life of God Himself.*

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